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THE EFFECT OF SUPERINTENDENT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLE ON BLACK AND HISPANIC STUDENT PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE

A Dissertation

by

CARL BRENT DOERFLER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2004

Major Subject: Political Science

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Approved as to style and content by:

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December 2004

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ABSTRACT

The Effect of Superintendent Representational Style on Black and Hispanic Student Preparation for College.

(December 2004)

Carl Brent Doerfler, B.A., Brigham Young University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Kenneth J. Meier

There are two main portions to this study. In the first portion (Chapters I-III) we identify policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices in public school districts in Texas that increase levels of college preparation among black and Hispanic students across a range of educational settings (rural, suburban, and urban). We identify these practices by interviewing school administrators at twenty-two school districts throughout the state. The school districts were selected by using education production function models to identify the highest and lowest performing school districts on a variety of college preparation measures. The first portion of the study is largely descriptive and qualitative in orientation. In the second portion of the study we identify high college preparation levels among minority students as a positive externality. Because college attendance benefits students as

individuals, regardless of the beneficial aspects of college attendance for society at large, students, parents, and others will request that school districts increase college preparation levels to some degree. However, given the nature of positive externalities, we explore the possibility that the reason why some school districts have higher college preparation levels among minority students than others is that they are led by an official policy-maker (the superintendent) who is committed to acting in the long-term interests of society (in other words, whose representational style is to act as a trustee). The second portion attempts to extend the causal chain back one link by exploring the possibility that superintendent representational style affects the types of policies, procedures, programs and pedagogical practices adopted and the district's commitment to implementing them, which in turn affects college preparation levels among minority students. The relationship between superintendent representational style and minority student preparation for college is tested using two data sources: a survey of public school superintendents throughout Texas gathered by the Texas Educational Excellence Project and college preparation measures gathered by the Texas Education Agency for all public schools in Texas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is the gateway to prosperity in the United States. Individuals with increased levels of education enjoy "higher salaries, longer working lives, more career mobility, and a higher quality of life" (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999, 3). Although students receive many benefits as individuals for college attendance, society as a whole also benefits from students' increased levels of education: college graduates are more likely to vote, assume civic leadership responsibilities, and utilize new technologies; and college graduates are less likely to engage in criminal activities (Bowen 1977; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991).

Given the beneficial effects of college attendance for individuals and society, it is not surprising that many researchers have attempted to identify factors which may increase a student's desire to attend college. Their efforts have not gone unrewarded. The college aspirations literature makes valuable contributions to our understanding of what factors influence a student's decision to attend college.

This dissertation follows the style of the *American Journal of Political Science.*

While the college aspirations literature answers many questions regarding college aspirations among students in general, it raises another, more troubling question: Why do disadvantaged students, despite having "aspirations for college during middle and high school grades that are as high or higher than the average for their age-mates" (McPartland and Braddock 1992, 13), attend college at much lower rates than do advantaged students? This is the guiding question for our research.

Because higher percentages of disadvantaged students than advantaged students desire to attend college, our research, while having its roots in the college aspirations' research, must move beyond the question of what increases college aspirations per se among disadvantaged students to identifying the perceived and actual barriers to college preparation and enrollment among disadvantaged students. As we seek to identify these factors, the first portion of our study (chapters I through III) will focus on the role that secondary schools play in helping disadvantaged students overcome barriers to college preparation and enrollment.

Lower College Attendance Rates Among Black and Hispanic Students: Why Worry About It?

Before we begin exploring how secondary schools help minority students prepare for and enroll in college, we must first address another question: Should our society be concerned about the lower college attendance rates among black and Hispanic students? We answer this question with an emphatic yes.

One of the major reasons why we should be concerned about lower college attendance rates among minorities is that college attendance is positively associated with levels of civic engagement and the development of social capital. College attendance prepares minority students to assume leadership roles in their community and to participate vigorously in our democracy. Bowen and Bok (1998), in perhaps the most extensive work written to date on the importance of college attendance among minorities, point out that the "active recruitment of minority students that began in the 1960s was motivated by more than a conviction that the enrollment of a diverse student body would improve the educational process for everyone. It was also inspired by a recognition that the country had a pressing need for well-educated black and Hispanic men and women who could assume

leadership roles in their communities and in every facet of national life" (156).

Using the College and Beyond dataset (an extensive survey of matriculants at 28 selective universities), Bowen and Bok find that students who attended elite colleges participated in civic activities at slightly higher rates than did students in the control group who attended any four-year college; and students who attended any four-year college participated in civic activities at higher rates than did students who had not attended any four-year college (156,157). The findings are clear: The higher the education level, the more likely a person is to participate in civic activities; and the better the quality of the university attended, the more likely a person is to participate in civic activities.

Bowen and Bok point out that black students who attended elite universities were even more active in civic endeavors than their white classmates (158). This finding suggests that minority communities have a critical need for talented, educated individuals to assume leadership roles. The situation becomes even more acute when we acknowledge that disadvantaged communities are greatly affected by government programs and policies, yet members of these communities are less likely to participate in the political process (Leighley

2001). Bowen and Bok explain the situation thus:

> [I]mportant opportunities exist for highly trained minority managers and professionals in meeting the pressing needs in predominantly minority communities. At present, minority groups are disadvantaged in government and politics because they are less likely to vote than the rest of the population. This is especially true in poor communities, where voting rates have been falling for three decades and are now far below the national average. Because these communities have such a vital stake in public policies involving health care, welfare, law enforcement, job training, education, and other areas, it is especially important that they have well-trained, articulate leaders to represent them in the political arena (12).

The need for college-educated, well trained minority leaders will become even greater in the United States of the future. According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, minority groups will comprise about 48% of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). If capable members of these minority groups do not assume leadership positions in the United States of the future, confidence in government will wane in minority communities (Gay 2002). Without elected officials to represent them, minorities may increasingly believe that they are unable to influence the workings of government through normal political processes.

Minority dissatisfaction with normal political processes may be augmented if minorities increasingly believe that they

are systematically being denied the benefits which accompany higher education levels because they are systematically being denied access to higher education. That a college education leads to certain benefits is no surprise. As mentioned earlier in this work, individuals with increased levels of education enjoy "higher salaries, longer working lives, more career mobility, and a higher quality of life" (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999, 3). A college education is necessary for entrance into many of the occupations in our society that pay well and are well respected. As long as all racial groups in our country believe they have equal access to higher education, and consequently have equal access to the benefits which accompany the attainment of higher education, widespread discontent among any particular group should be unlikely. Unfortunately, evidence exists which suggests that minority groups do not believe that they have equal access to higher education.

For example, the SAT and the ACT are repeatedly attacked by minority groups as being racially biased and class biased. Despite efforts by the companies which design and administer the tests to eliminate questions which favor white or upper-class students, a test score gap persists between minority and white students, even after controlling for socio-economic status and family background (Jencks and Phillips 1998). As

long as minority students continue to score below white students on college entrance examinations, these tests--and any process which continues to use the tests as one of the criteria for admission to universities--will continue to be viewed with suspicion by minorities; and the tests will continue to be open to the charge of racial and class bias.

Additional evidence which suggests that minority groups believe they are being denied equal access to higher education comes from the literature surrounding the school choice debate. Schneider, Teske, and Marschall (2000) report that when parents are asked what they find important in schools, higher percentages of black and Hispanic parents than white parents mention high test scores (98). Apparently minority parents view test scores and other objective measures of academic performance as serving a "gatekeeper" function. As long as minority students are trapped in schools which fail to give them the academic preparation they need in order to score well on college entrance examinations, they can not pass through the gatekeeping points on their way to economic prosperity and admission to the middle class.

Delpit (1995) has argued that this has led to a situation where black education reformers and black parents demand an educational system which emphasizes the development of skills which will allow minority students to score well on

standardized tests. Unfortunately for minority parents, progressive white education reformers have other goals which are increasingly making their way into the educational establishment. Delpit describes the situation thus:

> Many liberal educators hold that the primary goal for education is for children to become autonomous, to develop fully who they are in the classroom setting without having arbitrary, outside standards forced upon them. This is a very reasonable goal for people whose children are already participants in the culture of power and who have already internalized its codes. . . . But parents who don't function within that culture often want something else. It's not that they disagree with the former aim . . . They want to ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society (1995, 28-29).

In other words, progressive education reformers are offering minority students a luxury they cannot afford and do not desire.

For example, Richard F. Elmore (1996) of the Harvard Graduate School of Education speaks disparagingly of teachers who "tend to think of knowledge as discrete bits of information about a particular subject and of student learning as the acquisition of this information through processes of repetition, memorization, and regular testing of recall" (2). He then advocates a number of pedagogical reforms for widespread adoption throughout the U.S. educational system which shift the focus from teacher-

centered learning activities to student-centered learning activities, from what is learned to how it is learned. He encourages an educational system in which "students may initiate a large share of the classroom talk"; he desires an educational system in which teachers "may ask broad, open-ended questions designed to elicit what students are thinking and how they are thinking, rather than to assess whether they have acquired discrete bits of information" (2).

Such an educational system ignores the demands of minority parents for pedagogical techniques and academic courses which will allow their children to score well on college entrance examinations. As the disparity increases between what minority parents want in an educational system and what is being offered, it is likely that they will lose confidence in the educational system and the broader system of government of which public schools are a part.

The situation described above forces us to ask an unsettling question: Is it possible that education reformers fear the adoption of pedagogical practices which will allow minority students to score as well on college entrance examinations as do white students? Regardless of how the preceding question is answered, we think the answer to the following question is no: Can you fault minorities for suspecting the motives of educational leaders who seem

hesitant to advocate the adoption of pedagogical practices which will allow minority students to score as well on college entrance examinations as do white students?

In addition to the reasons discussed above, our society has another reason to be concerned about the lower college attendance rates among black and Hispanic students. Race relations remains one of our society's greatest problems (Carmines and Stimson 1989). While all of our society's race-relations problems will not be solved by increasing the number of minority students who attend college, survey evidence suggests that students acquire valuable skills at college which help them interact better with members of other races. Bowen and Bok (1998), again using the College and Beyond data set, find that large percentages of students thought their college experience made an important contribution to their "ability to work effectively and get along well with people from different races/cultures" (225). Their findings are worth examining closely.

Students who had entered college in 1976 and students who had entered college in 1989 were asked a number of questions years after their undergraduate experience (1996 for the '76 cohort, 1997 for the '89 cohort). A number of these questions were designed to measure the contribution which attending college had made to the development of

academic, professional, personal, and social skills among the respondents.

In one section of the survey, respondents were asked to "Please indicate how important each of the following has been in your life since college." A number of skills then followed, which respondents rated from 5 to 1, where 5=Very Important, and 1=Not At All Important. Of particular interest to our study is how important respondents thought the following skill was: the "ability to work effectively and get along well with people from different races/cultures." Among the 1976 respondents who were white, 42% rated this ability either a 5 or a 4; among the 1989 respondents who were white, 55% rated this ability either a 5 or a 4. The numbers are higher for black respondents: 74% of the 1976 cohort rated this ability either a 5 or a 4, as did 76% of the 1989 cohort (224). These findings suggest that as our society becomes increasingly diverse racially, students increasingly recognize the importance of being able to interact well with members of different races and cultures.

But are colleges helping students develop this vital skill? The survey results suggest that there is room for improvement. After reporting how important various skills and abilities were in their lives since college, respondents were then asked, "How much did your undergraduate experience

help you develop in these same areas?" Respondents rated the contribution of their undergraduate experience in these various areas from 5 to 1, where 5=A Great Deal, and 1=None At All. When asked how well their undergraduate experience had contributed to their "ability to work effectively and get along well with people from different races/cultures," 18% of the 1976 respondents who were white gave their undergraduate experience a 5 or a 4 in this area, as did 34% of the 1989 respondents who were white. 30% of the 1976 black respondents gave their undergraduate experience a 5 or a 4 in this area, as did 46% of the 1989 respondents who were black (227).

These numbers suggest that colleges are improving their ability to help students develop skills which will enable them to interact effectively with people from other races and cultures; however, the numbers also suggest that there is a disturbing gap between the number of people who view this skill as important in their lives and the number of people who felt that their undergraduate experience had helped them develop this skill. Perhaps if enrollment rates for minority students could be increased, students from all backgrounds would have increased opportunities to interact with and learn from people of different races or cultures.

Bowen and Bok report that this is exactly what occurred

among the students they surveyed: "While many other variables are at work, there is an unmistakable association between the relative size of the black student population and the degree of interaction between white and black students. As one would expect on the basis of simple numerical probabilities, the degree of interaction varies directly with the black share of enrollment" (234). Bowen and Bok also find that the "relative size of the black student population also correlates positively with white perceptions of the contribution that college made to their ability to get along across racial lines and with the degree of emphasis that white students believe their colleges should place on enrolling a racially/ethnically diverse student population--though not with the importance attached to getting along" (234, footnote 11).

Interestingly enough, Bowen and Bok find that not only does the "size of the minority group affect interactions," but they also find that the selectivity of the school attended matters (236). The more selective the school attended, the more likely students were to interact with members of other races and cultures (236). The evidence we have examined suggests that universities can play an important role in improving the ability of people of different races to interact well with each other; and the

more selective the university and the larger the number of minority students attending the university, the better able a university is to perform this role.

After examining the evidence, we feel comfortable making the following assertion: Our society has a great stake in increasing the number of minority students who attend college. In order to achieve the greatest gains for our society, we also have a stake in increasing the number of minority students who attend the most selective universities our country has to offer. This means that our society should not only be concerned with identifying and removing the barriers which are keeping minority students from attending college; we must also be concerned with preparing minority students to attend the *best* colleges possible.

Prior Research on College Aspirations: A Source for Clues on How to Increase Minority Attendance Rates

The existing college aspirations literature makes valuable contributions to our understanding of what factors influence a student's decision to attend college. While this literature does not answer all of the questions surrounding the question of why minority enrollment rates are not as high as white students', it nevertheless provides us with an

excellent starting point from which to begin our journey.

The college aspirations literature is fairly massive. We do, nonetheless, think it is important to summarize the main findings of prior research. Although scholars disagree to some extent among themselves, prior research suggests that a student's decision to attend college is influenced by four main factors: 1) the characteristics of peers, 2) the characteristics of parents, 3) the student's characteristics, and 4) the characteristics of schools attended. We will consider each main factor in turn.

Much has been made of peer influence during the teen years in the social science literature. Not surprisingly then, much of the college aspirations literature seeks to establish how and to what degree peers influence a student's decision to attend college. Most studies find that peers do influence a student's decision to attend college, but often in an indirect way, rather than by directly encouraging or discouraging college attendance. In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (Chen 1997), researchers conclude that students with friends who care about learning are "less likely to drop out of school and more likely to be enrolled in an academic program, graduate from high school and continue their education after graduating" (1). Picou

and Carter (1976) find that the peer modeling effect influences a student more than direct encouragement from friends. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999), however, in perhaps the most comprehensive study on factors that influence college aspirations to date, find that while peers exert some influence on students' plans to attend college, this influence is minor compared to the influence of parents.

Despite assertions by scholars such as Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper that direct peer influence is moderate compared to the influence of parents, the indirect influence of peers might have greater consequences than many scholars realize. For example, as the study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education asserts, peers can influence a student's decision on whether or not to enroll in an academic program. As we will see later in this work when discussing student characteristics, whether or not a student is enrolled in an academic program exerts a strong influence on student aspirations and eventual college attendance. Thus, peers may affect a student's major decisions (such as whether or not to attend college) at a later date by influencing a student's seemingly minor decisions (such as whether or not to take a challenging course) at an earlier date.

A subset of the peer influence literature examines high

school contextual effects. These studies explore the impact of such variables as average socioeconomic status, average student ability, and the proportion of male enrollment within any given school on the college aspirations of any given student. These studies generally conclude that school context exerts little direct influence on a student's college aspirations, but they do influence a student's choice of peers and the type of curriculum to which he or she has access (see, for example, Alwin and Otto 1977).

The school context studies introduce a number of interesting possibilities. For example, an intellectually capable minority student who attends a school of above-average socioeconomic status but below-average student ability might increase his or her college aspirations as a result. The logic is that the minority student will interact with students who are planning on going to college largely because their parents are wealthy and can afford to send them to school, even if the wealthy student does not receive any financial aid. The student will realize that he or she is performing better and is more intellectually capable than these other students, and consequently will give greater consideration to attending college, particularly if financial aid and financial aid information is made available to the

student. These studies also introduce the possibility that tracking decisions by some schools might be the result of comparisons between students: a student of average ability in an above-average school might be placed in a lower academic track than a student of similar ability in a below-average school.

Most of the college aspirations literature agrees that peers exert some influence on a student's postsecondary plans, but parents seem to exert a larger influence in most situations. Previous research examines questions such as whether a parent's encouragement and expectations, education level, and socioeconomic status influence a student's college aspirations. Not surprisingly, the studies generally find that the role of parents is very important and that as parental encouragement, education levels, and socioeconomic status increase, students are more likely to attend college (Bateman 1990; Hossler and Stage 1992; Stage and Hossler 1989; Gallotti and Mark 1994; Paulsen 1990; Sewell and Shah 1978).

The literature suggests that parental influence bears a similarity to the influence of peers in that parental influence sometimes operates in complex and indirect ways. For example, Hossler and Vesper (1993) find that as parents

receive more information about college costs, they are more likely to begin saving for their child's postsecondary education. Students then view their parents' efforts to save money for their education as a sign of encouragement and support, so they increase their college aspirations as well. As parents observe their child's increasing college aspirations, the parents are more likely to increase their savings rate.

McDonough (1994) finds that some parents show help their children with the college admissions process by hiring private educational consultants. These consultants increase the amount of information both parents and students have about the range of college options and college costs, and they help students with such tasks as essay writing for college applications and developing their standardized test taking skills. As students write better college application essays and perform better on college entrance exams, they are more likely to attend college and increase the range of their college options. The point of these examples is that parental encouragement takes a variety of forms, and it can operate in indirect ways, the full impact of which researchers still do not understand totally. Parents matter. Exactly how they matter and to what degree is still a subject

of scholarly debate.

In addition to the influence of parents and peers, student characteristics also influence a student's college aspirations. Much research suggests that, next to parental encouragement, the best predictor of postsecondary aspirations is student achievement, typically measured by grade point average (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999; Sheppard, Schmit, and Pugh 1992; Bishop 1977; Jackson 1978; Sharp et al. 1996; Tuttle 1981). Researchers also find that students who do well in school receive more encouragement from parents, teachers, peers, and relatives to attend college (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999; McDonough 1997; Weis 1990).

The final factor affecting a student's college aspirations is the nature of the schools attended prior to college. A large portion of the school characteristics literature seems to focus on two main questions: How do schools' tracking practices and college information dissemination practices affect students' postsecondary plans and their ability to pursue those plans? These studies almost universally agree that placement in academic and college preparatory tracks increases a student's college aspirations (see, for example, Lee and Bryk 1988). These

studies also almost universally agree that the more information that students and parents receive about college in general, the college admissions process, and college costs and financial aid, the more likely students are to attend college (see, for example, Jackson 1982).

Identifying Successful Practices at Secondary Schools: The Research Design for the First Portion of Our Study

Our review of the college aspirations literature supports the assertion that a student's decision to pursue a higher education is influenced by the student's peers, parents, abilities, and schools attended. Because of the latter's public policy implications, our study focuses on the characteristics of the students' schools. If our society is determined to identify and remove the perceived and actual barriers to college attendance among minority students, then this is the natural place to begin. If our research can demonstrate that certain school practices lead to greater minority preparation for college, then our findings hopefully will inform public policy debates and the decisions of public policy makers (see Elmore 1996).

We also choose to focus on the characteristics of the

students' schools because of the impact which schools can have on a student's peers, parents, and abilities. For example, while schools cannot choose students' friends for them, they can aggressively track students, or they can offer only a limited core college-prep curriculum which all students are required to take. These school-level decisions, while not forcing students to befriend any given individual, obviously influence with whom students interact in classes and whom they regard as their "peers."

The first step in our research design is to identify school districts that are doing an excellent job of preparing minority students for college. We suggest that a district does an excellent job of preparing minority students for college if it is successful at the following: 1) getting large percentages of minority students to take the SAT and the ACT, 2) increasing the average score of minority students on the SAT and the ACT, 3) enrolling minority students in Advanced Placement courses, and 4) getting minority students to take Advanced Placement tests.

Taking the SAT or the ACT is a necessary step in the college admissions process. Although many junior colleges will accept students without their having taken these tests, most universities of any repute require them; and students

cut themselves off from a large range of college options if they do not take the tests. When schools encourage students to take the SAT and the ACT, they signal to students that higher education is important. They also signal to students that it is important to keep their range of postsecondary options as wide as possible.

In addition to encouraging students to take the SAT or ACT, excellent schools also help students perform well on these tests. Although SAT and ACT scores are not the only admissions criteria used by most universities, they are an important factor; and high SAT or ACT scores are usually required for admission to the nation's most elite universities (Bowen and Bok 1998). The higher students' SAT or ACT scores, the larger the range of their postsecondary options.

The percentage of minority students in Advanced Placement courses is used as one of our measures of how well a district is preparing minority students for college because Advanced Placement courses typically represent the best education which a school has to offer. Advanced Placement teachers are typically more experienced and have more education in their content areas than other teachers, and they receive additional training by educators who run the

Advanced Placement program. Minorities have traditionally been underrepresented in academic courses in general and in Advanced Placement courses in particular (U.S. Department of Education 1995; Meier and Stewart 1991; Meier, Stewart, and England 1989).

Our final measure of how well a district is preparing minority students for college is the percentage of minority students taking advanced placement tests. If students take and pass Advanced Placement tests, they demonstrate that they have mastered a considerable body of knowledge. Most colleges recognize this achievement and give students college credit for their efforts as a result. As students gain college credit, they gain confidence that they can handle college-level work, and the cost of college is reduced. If a student takes the SAT or the ACT, performs well on the SAT or the ACT, takes challenging Advanced Placement courses, and earns college credit by taking Advanced Placement tests, such a student should be prepared for college academically.

Our study differs from many earlier studies of student college aspirations by focusing on the quality of college preparation minority students have received rather than on college aspirations per se. Minority students already have college aspirations that are as high or higher than their

classmates (McPartland and Braddock 1992). The desire to attend college is critical, but it is not sufficient; a student may have extremely high college aspirations, but unless that student has received adequate preparation and has performed all of the steps necessary for college admission, that student's aspirations will be frustrated. As some students in Rosenbaum's (1980) study found, even though they had very high college aspirations, their postsecondary options were limited by whether or not they were in an academic track.

In addition to having a different focus than much of the college aspirations research, our study moves beyond much of the educational research which identifies school-related variables linked to academic success among minorities. Educational researchers have devoted much time and energy to the task of identifying factors which increase minority academic achievement. Their labors have borne fruit. As Donna M. Murphy (1986) states, "A review of hundreds of studies of inner-city education showed the following to be crucial to urban school success: (a) structured learning environments, (b) emphasis on mathematics and reading, (c) low adult-to-child ratios, (d) staff development, (e) parental involvement, and (f) active, motivated leadership"

(504; see also Clark 1980).

While the labors of educational researchers addressing minority academic achievement have born fruit, the fruit is of a limited variety. Research in this area tends to focus on black students in urban areas. Our study moves beyond much of this earlier research by focusing on the high-end academic achievement which makes college attendance possible among black and Hispanic students and by expanding the range of educational settings explored to include urban, rural, and suburban districts, not just urban settings. If certain school inputs benefit disadvantaged students more than other students (Burtless 1996), then we should find evidence of this for both black and Hispanic students at high levels of academic achievement across a variety of educational settings. Also, if we are interested in increasing college attendance rates, we need to identify the successful practices of districts that are helping both black and Hispanic students prepare well for college across a range of educational settings, not just black students in urban areas. Texas is an ideal state in which to conduct our study since it maintains an excellent database and has a large number of multi-racial school districts.

In order to identify districts which are doing an

excellent job of preparing minority students for college, we ran a number of education production function statistical models. School districts face different constraints, such as the amount of tax dollars available to them. Education production functions allow us to control for these factors so that we can better assess how a district is doing given the constraints within which they are operating (Burtless 1996). The primary control variables in our model were financial resources available to the district, such as instructional expenditures per pupil and total budgeted revenue per pupil, and student characteristic measures, such as the percentage of low-income students and the percentage of special education students. In our analysis we use the five different dependent variables described above: 1) the percentage of minority students taking the SAT or the ACT, 2) average minority student scores on the SAT, 3) average minority student scores on the ACT, 4) the percentage of minority students taking Advanced Placement courses, and 5) the percentage of minority students taking Advanced Placement tests.

After running the models, we totaled the standardized residuals from all five models. Schools that did much better than our models predicted they would given the constraints

under which they were operating received high scores; schools that did much worse than our models predicted they would given the constraints under which they were operating received low scores. After identifying the highest-performing districts in the state, we identified low-performing districts that were geographically located near the high-performing districts. The reasoning behind this selection is that we are seeking to identify districts that are operating in somewhat similar environments but are getting radically different results in terms of preparing minority students for college. Several schools were also included in the study that are doing an outstanding job of preparing students for Texas' standardized test of basic skills, but are doing an average job of preparing students for college.

Interviews with school administrators, such as counselors, assistant principals, or deans of curriculum, were arranged at the various school districts, and our most capable researchers were sent to conduct the interviews. A total of twenty-two interviews were conducted. The interviews typically lasted between one and two hours.

The purpose of the interviews was twofold. The first purpose was to find out what the top-performing schools are

doing in order to get such outstanding results on the specific dependent variables used in our statistical models. Our statistical models can help us identify which schools are doing well, but they cannot tell us what programs, organizational structures, or instructional strategies these schools are using in order to get such good results.

The second purpose of the interviews was to discover what these high-performing schools are doing in general to prepare minority students for college. Our statistical models used five different dependent variables, all designed to measure how well a district is preparing its minority students for college. We argue that these dependent variables also measure another closely related phenomenon: a district's *commitment* to preparing minority students for college. If a district is highly committed to preparing minority students for college, they will likely be seeking multiple ways to prepare students for college.

For example, do these schools with a high commitment to preparing minority students for college make special efforts to inform parents about college options, college costs, and financial aid? Some of the college aspirations literature suggests that as parents receive more information about college costs, they increase their saving rate for their

child's education; children are likely to view this as a sign of parental support, and they increase their college aspirations as a result. If districts are implementing special programs to increase parent's information levels, we are likely to find such programs being developed and implemented in districts that have a high commitment to preparing minority students for college.

Given the exploratory nature of this first portion of our study, we chose to conduct the interviews in an open-ended manner. An open-ended interview format has certain advantages. First of all, it puts the interviewee at ease and encourages the open exchange of information. It also encourages the interviewee to begin listing those factors which they view as most important first and encourages interviewees to list factors which we may not have thought of; rather than tell educators what they should be doing in order to prepare students for college, we allowed them to tell us. Interestingly enough, although we think interviewees generally listed the most important factors first, toward the end of several interviews the interviewee's eyes suddenly lit up as he or she remembered something unique which the district did that got great results.

Although an open-ended interview format has certain

advantages and was appropriate for our exploratory purposes, it does possess certain disadvantages. Perhaps the most important disadvantage is that it yields data which are difficult to use in a quantitative manner. This means that the conclusions drawn from the first portion of our study will be largely impressionistic in nature. This does not present an insurmountable problem, however, since we will use the findings from the first portion of our study in order to design research instruments for use in the second portion which will produce data more amenable to quantitative analysis and hypothesis testing. As King, Keohane, and Verba point out, "It is pointless to seek to explain what we have not described with a reasonable degree of precision" (1994, 44). In the first portion of our study we will largely describe; in the second portion of our study we will attempt to explain.

At the beginning of each interview, educators at high-achieving schools were told that we were conducting a study on college aspirations among minority students. We explained the statistical models which we had used, and informed them that based on these models they were doing an outstanding job of preparing minority students for college. We then asked them what they thought they were doing to get such

outstanding results.

Educators at low-achieving schools were also told that we were conducting a study on college aspirations among minority students, but we did not tell them that their school had done a poor job at preparing students for college based on the results from our statistical models. Not only would this have been rude, but it most likely would have encouraged a defensive response and would have limited the amount of information given. We therefore told the interviewees that we were visiting schools to find out what schools were doing well in order to prepare minority students for college and to find out what challenges they faced in the college preparation process. Although this meant that our prompt was different from that given at high-performing schools, we felt that it was the most tactful and ethical way to begin exploring why these low-performing schools are getting such radically different results even though they are operating in seemingly similar environments and facing seemingly similar constraints as the high-performing schools.

One of the most important advantages of visiting both high-performing and low-performing schools is that it allows us to check the counterfactual. If low-performing schools have the same programs, policies, and procedures as high-

performing schools, then the programs, policies, and procedures cannot be the sole cause of increased minority aspirations.

In the next chapter we will describe the interviews. We will try to give the reader a flavor of each school, but we will not report the entire interview. Instead, we will emphasize some of the unique contributions which each interview made to our understanding of what influences the level of college preparation among minority students. Then, in Chapter III, we will report our findings in a broader framework; we will then use the findings to make generalizations about how secondary schools can successfully prepare minority students for college.

In Chapter IV we will explore the possibility that the existing literature on college preparation among minority students is incomplete because it suffers from a fatal flaw: It ignores the representational role of school superintendents. Superintendents are an excellent example of administrative elites who exercise considerable discretion as they manage the public's schools. As superintendents manage their districts, they must decide to what degree they will act as neutral administrators who seek to implement policies decided by the school board. They also must decide to what

degree they will advocate and implement policies they believe will be in the long-term interest of society despite opposition from important parts of the community. In other words, superintendents act as delegates, trustees, or some combination of the two (Davidson 1970; Kuklinski and Elling 1977). Superintendents who act as neutral administrators and leave policy decisions to the school board are behaving more like delegates. Superintendents who advocate and implement policies they believe are in the long-term interest of society despite opposition from important parts of the community are behaving more like trustees.

The most important hypothesis we will test in Chapter IV is the following: As superintendents manage their districts more like trustees (and less like delegates) college preparation among minority students will increase. Superintendents who act more like trustees might advocate and implement certain policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices that increase levels of college preparation among minority students. Educational researchers have spent much time and effort identifying these policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices. The second portion of our study attempts to extend the causal chain back one link, exploring the possibility that superintendent

representational style affects the types of policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices adopted and implemented, which in turn affect college preparation levels among minority students.

In Chapter V we will summarize our findings and make policy recommendations.

CHAPTER II

INTERVIEWS WITH ADMINISTRATORS

Interview #1

Southeast TX

Interviewee: Dean of Curriculum

10:00 a.m., November 30, 2000

Our first interview was conducted at the high school which is doing the best job in the state at preparing minority students for college, according to our statistical analysis. We interviewed the dean of curriculum, a man who has a definite future in motivational speaking should he ever decide to leave public education. He spoke for a solid hour before showing signs of winding down. If enthusiasm among administrators is necessary for student academic success, then this school has nothing to fear. The dean of curriculum is an articulate, educated man who appears to care deeply about education in general and about the specific students at his school. As we walked the campus with him after the interview, he called several students by name and asked them questions which demonstrated that he was interested in the students' lives beyond the classroom. He is the type of gentleman who restores your faith in public education.

According to the dean of curriculum, the teachers at the high school share the belief that education is the key to opportunity. In harmony with this belief, teachers and administrators make an active effort to track students into the highest and most challenging courses which they can. The curriculum is aligned from kindergarten to grade twelve with the expectation that students will eventually take the highest-level classes which the district offers. This means that first grade math teachers are laying the foundation for all students to take calculus-level courses in high school. Since the ultimate goal in mathematics courses is to prepare as many students as possible for calculus, teachers attempt to introduce elements of calculus into their lesson plans and discussions whenever possible. Teachers recognize that not all students will eventually take calculus, but they also recognize that this is the choice of the student, not the teacher. Their job as teachers is to make every opportunity available to the student. If a student chooses to close himself or herself off to higher-level mathematics courses, then the teacher points out to the student that he or she has closed off certain opportunities.

Teachers have embedded SAT and other test-taking strategies in the entire curriculum. This is done in various

ways, such as helping students to develop a college-level vocabulary as early as possible. While these practices may be seen negatively as "teaching to the test," the same practices may also be seen positively as "teachers attempting to ensure that what they are teaching kids is aligned with how they are going to be assessed." The teachers recognize that, right or wrong, high test scores are necessary if students want to attend prestigious schools; if students do not do well on the SAT or the ACT, then they have cut themselves off from the opportunity of attending a prestigious school.

In harmony with their belief that every student should have every opportunity he or she wants, educators at this high school use pre-A.P. and A.P. classes instead of gifted classes. This allows students to participate in challenging classes despite not having been identified as "gifted." A.P. classes also allow students to leave the classroom with college credit, not just a "great experience." For these reasons, these educators view pre-A.P. and A.P. classes as superior to gifted classes.

This high school pays for every student to take the PSAT in his or her junior year, if the student desires to take the test. This makes every student who so desires eligible for

national merit scholarships; it also gives the student much-needed practice taking standardized, high-stakes tests. Counselors meet with students individually after the PSAT results come back to discuss what the results mean and to suggest areas of improvement. Counselors meet at least twice a year with all students individually, regardless of whether or not they take the PSAT. They meet with some students more often, of course.

A PSAT and SAT preparation course is offered for elective credit, but the dean of curriculum estimates that less than one percent of the students take it. Despite the low percentage of students who actually take the course, we researchers feel that offering the test preparation course for credit is but one of many examples which illustrate this high school's commitment to academic excellence and putting learning first. When asked why he thought their high school was so successful, the dean responded that it is not just one thing that they do--it is everything they do. No silver bullets. It all boils down to what teachers do in the classroom. Educators here constantly question what they do in an attempt to improve. They do in-house surveys on how to improve, and they send out surveys to parents and recent graduates.

Factors beyond the school's control certainly affect to some degree their students' decisions to prepare for and attend college. For example, loan information is available close to the school through Greater East Texas Services. Also, having a major university nearby undoubtedly persuades many students to prepare for and eventually attend college; however, another nearby school district is markedly less successful at preparing minority students for college. This fact leads us to believe that many of the characteristics of this high school other than proximity to a major university are influencing students' decisions to prepare for and eventually attend an institution of higher learning.

Interview #2

San Antonio, TX

Interviewee: Pre-college Advisor

9:00 a.m., December 18, 2000

Originally one of the success stories in our study, things at this high school have changed since our data were collected. In 1998 the high school was split into two campuses: a junior campus for grades 9 and 10, and a senior campus for grades 11 and 12. Since the split, the pre-college advisor has observed a slight decline in "high-end"

tests such as the SAT, the ACT, AP tests and IB tests. The advisor notes that students have been trained to take the TAAS, and they are not transferring well to high-order thinking skills tests. The split in the campuses has encouraged a focus on preparing students for the TAAS at lower grade levels instead of preparing them for eventual high achievement in challenging courses and on college entrance examinations. The split in the campuses which has led to decreasing test scores aside, this high school continues to do many of the things other successful schools are doing in order to prepare students for college.

Interview #3

San Antonio, TX

Director of Guidance and Testing

3:00 p.m., December 18, 2000

This excellent school district is preparing students for college at the elementary level by expanding their gifted and talented programs to include students who score at the 90th percentile on standardized tests instead of the usual 96th percentile. The director of guidance and testing refers to this as expanding the district's talent pool. These high-achieving students are identified as early as kindergarten,

and then teachers try to give the students experiences which will help them grow intellectually. The push is to give these youngsters as many "experiential experiences" as possible. [Apparently educational practices at the early grade levels have reached such a dismal state of routinization that "experiential experiences" is not viewed as a redundancy.] They try to get as many students as possible into talented and gifted classes.

The school district has a program designed to help capable 9th graders who are starting to fall behind academically, known as the SOS group. Teachers work with students on an individual basis, but a sense of closeness with the group is still achieved. The teacher's main goal is to help 9th graders experience success early. One of the ways the district meets the needs of these students is by allowing them access to Plato, a self-paced computer program for students who have failed a course. Plato addresses the specific weaknesses or needs of individual students.

The district has done an outstanding job of getting parents and community businesses involved. One of the ways which they have done this is through the "scholars" program. The scholars program is a business partnership which allows business leaders to come into classes to talk with students.

The leaders persuade students to be in the recommended program and to sign up for extra math and foreign language classes. Another program, High Schools That Work, aims at the integration of curriculum and preparing students for careers by having teachers go to local businesses and do job shadowing. This is an attempt to pull teachers out of their field of experience so that they have new ideas and so that they know what skills students will need in order to be successful. For each day spent job shadowing, teachers are supposed to spend two days developing curriculum. The school district tries to help students recognize what they will need to do in order to become a doctor, lawyer, or whatever else they want to become. Students are encouraged to write down their goals on paper, and then counselors help them take the courses necessary in order to achieve their goals.

Interview #4

San Antonio, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

10:00 a.m., December 19, 2000

Driving toward this poorly performing high school, even the most obtuse observer notices the bars on the windows of neighborhood houses, the graffiti on the school walls, and

the barbed wire fences surrounding the school property. The cramped offices with depressing wood paneling are characteristic of the interior of the school. To put it bluntly, this does not look like a place that either teachers or students would look forward to going to every day.

The counselor seems like a caring individual who wants to help students achieve their dreams, but she is obviously aware that she is not working in a top-notch district. She commented that there are a lot of gangs at the school; she admitted to not going into the halls during passing periods. There are both territorial and racial gangs in the school. Students make a distinction between gangs and crews. Crews appear to be watered-down versions of gangs, providing the sense of belonging which students desire without requiring students to engage in hard-core gang activity such as drive-by shootings, but still requiring students to engage in such behavior as smoking grass or tobacco.

Although this high school is experiencing little success in preparing students for college, they have many of the same programs that other more successful schools have. They encourage students to take the courses required to earn a recommended diploma rather than settling for the state's minimum requirement diploma, they have a college day, they

publish a newsletter advertising scholarship opportunities and other college information, and they have brought in an outside business called Surescore to attempt to raise student scores on the SAT and ACT. Surescore trains teachers in how to raise student scores by teaching teachers vocabulary development activities, test-taking strategies, etc.

The counselor noted that it is like pulling teeth to get applications back from even high-ranked students. If a college application involves an essay, the students are completely turned off. The academic vice-principal and the principal recently introduced a senior-year English class designed to help students with essays and college applications.

Apparently the community has been less than impressed with the college preparation which students have been receiving, so the counselors from the district were asked to meet with the school board to discuss what they were doing to prepare students. After the counselors explained the programs they offered and the efforts which they and the teachers had been making, the school board was impressed with their efforts. Although the school board appears interested in having students attend college, one wonders if this interest has permeated to the rest of the community and to

the students themselves. The counselor lamented that many students take a short senior day so they can earn money for a car, instead of taking courses to expand their horizons.

Interview #5

San Antonio, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

1:00 p.m., December 19, 2000

This low-performing school has attempted several programs to help students prepare for college, with varying degrees of success. Upward Bound has not been too helpful because of inconsistency. They do not show up on a regular basis, and when they do, new people come every time. Apparently the organization has high turnover, limiting the ability of the volunteers to form meaningful ties with the students which they are attempting to help.

Project Stay has been a little more helpful. They come for about three-quarters of the day. They meet with seniors and reinforce the importance of college. They follow up on whether the students have filled out college applications, then they follow up on whether the students have filled out financial aid applications. Project stay helps keep on the seniors because counselors don't have all the time in the

world.

Surescore has been a little less consistent than they promised to be, but they have taken students on tours of college campuses, including a visit to six schools within a two day period. Later they will provide tours of many of the schools in San Antonio.

This high school, like other poorly performing schools which we visited, is also surrounded by barbed wire, and wood paneling graces the halls. Not wanting to depress my readers too thoroughly, I will forbear describing the principal's polyester pant suit.

Interview #6

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

4:00 p.m., January 8, 2001

Educators at this school, which finished near the bottom in our analysis, encourage every child to go on to college. Each year counselors give a special presentation on the importance of continuing education beyond high school, stressing the need for continuing education beyond high school if students desire to be successful. To prepare students for the college experience, this high school tries

to enroll as many students as possible in concurrent enrollment classes offered in conjunction with South Texas Community College and UT Pan American. Books and tuition are paid for by the district, unless students get a D or an F, in which case the student has to foot the bill. The district also helps pay for up to two A.P. exams a year. The cost to the student after district contributions is only twelve dollars per test.

Scholarship information is given out daily through Channel 37, the district's education channel which goes to every home in the area which has cable. Computers are available in a computer lab and in every classroom for students desiring to apply on-line. The high school holds a college day every year, plus recruiters visit the school regularly. Every classroom has a television, on which announcements are made regarding scholarship information, recruitment visits, etc. The school hosts a financial aid night for parents, helping them with such tasks as filing their income taxes so that their children can receive federal financial aid. One of the biggest challenges is getting parents to get their taxes in on time. The college day is primarily attended by juniors and seniors from this high school, but some students come from other schools, and even

some promising 7th graders come in for about the last 45 minutes. The district is trying to get kids at a younger age to aspire to go to college. If students need help with any part of the application process, they are given individual attention. Counselors will sit down with students and give them help with applications, financial aid forms, etc.

In harmony with the educational philosophy that you cannot go wrong by having high academic expectations for students, all students are initially placed on the recommended diploma plan. Their schedule is adjusted later if there are difficulties. The school offers a test-taking strategies class for the SAT and the PSAT. They encourage all sophomores in pre-AP to take the course, but it is open to everyone. The title of the course is Reading Applications. The course focuses primarily on vocabulary development and reading because language barriers are sometimes a problem. Students' math scores are often good, but their vocabulary and reading scores often trail far behind. In another attempt to overcome the language barrier problem, the school is making a big push to get students reading for pleasure.

The test-taking strategies class is the result of the school's partnership with Surescore. They have worked with

Surescore for about 3 to 4 years. Scores have gone up during that time, but the number of students taking the test has also gone up, which may be bringing the average score back down. At the initial meeting with Surescore, the representative told parents that there is a positive correlation between a person's vocabulary and their future salary. The school decided to go with Surescore for the reading applications class because they are a Hispanic business and understand the problems Hispanic kids face. Surescore trains teachers for several days during the summer, and then representatives come out to discuss challenges teachers are facing.

One of the main district goals established about 3 years ago was to increase college awareness and attendance. In order to meet this goal, the district has undertaken several efforts, in addition to the efforts described above. The district is paying to send the head counselor of the high school on a Northeast college tour to such campuses as Harvard, MIT, Boston College, Trinity, and Brown. The counselor knows the Texas schools well and has a good rapport with the admissions officers in many of the Texas schools, but the tour is an attempt to help her develop a good rapport with the admissions officers of some prestigious out-of-state

schools.

The district recently received a "Gear Up" grant. The grant provides funds for a mentor who works with a cohort of 300 to 400 seventh graders currently at the district's junior high school. The counselor/mentor, whose salary for five years is totally paid for by the grant, is supposed to focus on increasing the students' college awareness, and he is supposed to come up with activities that will enhance students' opportunities to go to college. The district is also making a concerted effort to familiarize junior high teachers with graduation requirements so that they will be better able to counsel students and prepare them for high school and college.

When asked what challenges the school encountered in preparing students for college, the counselor mentioned such factors as the low socio-economic status of many of the parents, the immaturity of students, the high mobility rate of many of the students, and teen pregnancy. Interestingly enough, she didn't mention anything that the school should be doing better. When the interviewer commented on all of the building construction occurring on campus, the counselor did mention that they had been overcrowded for quite some time, and that they were one of the last school districts in the

valley to receive improvements in their facilities.

Interview #7

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Head Counselor

10:00 a.m., January 9, 2001

The beautiful, sprawling, palm tree-covered campus of this outstanding high school has a collegial feel, with individual buildings being labeled according to the area of emphasis, e.g., liberal arts, sciences, etc. No barbed wire is in sight, and occasional patches of fresh paint testify to the quick removal of any graffiti. Fliers advertising pre-AP courses which will be offered in the spring hang from the walls.

Although this high school does many things which other successful schools do in order to prepare their students for college, their AP program is booming, for a variety of reasons. Educators here make a concerted effort to gear the students to take AP courses. In addition to teachers doing a great job at preparing and encouraging students to take AP courses, the state requirements for a distinguished diploma have helped persuade many students to take AP courses as well. The AP program really took off here because of some

very dedicated and influential teachers, particularly in the science department. These teachers would often come in on Saturdays and before and after normal school hours in order to provide additional help to students. Once other teachers saw the dedication of this core group of teachers, and the subsequent high achievement by students on the science AP tests, other departments began to follow suit.

The dean of instruction in charge of the AP program has a huge parent night. He has each department chair speak on their program in particular, and he has the counselors talk about the AP program in general. The goal is to work with parents and to sell them on the idea of having their children take AP courses. The counselors and teachers emphasize the fact that AP courses count for college credit, which winds up saving parents money. The theatre is usually packed, with 450 or so parents and students usually attending.

Teachers who are asked to teach AP courses are very well versed in their subject area. The district pays for teachers to attend workshops during the summer to receive training in how to teach AP courses effectively, and teachers also attend additional mini sessions during the year. If the school does not have a qualified teacher for a less-requested AP course, students may still take a desired course via satellite

through the distance learning center. Other cooperating schools in the area also participate in the distance learning program.

As if students did not receive enough encouragement to take AP courses, nearby UT Pan American offers scholarships to students who earn a B average in 4 concurrent enrollment or AP courses.

Block scheduling has helped increase student achievement overall, and in particular in AP courses. Students take 4 classes a day for 18 weeks for 90 minutes each day. AP courses are usually blocked for the entire year (36 weeks). The AP teachers love this arrangement, feeling that it gives them adequate time to prepare students for the tests. The block scheduling forces kids to prioritize, particularly if they want to be in extra-curricular activities and still graduate with a distinguished diploma.

In addition to the AP program, the school also offers a Med Ed program which exposes students to different medical careers. Students do volunteer work for health professionals and they listen to doctors, dentists, and other health professionals describe their field and explain to students what preparation is required in order to be a health professional. The program holds workshops on ACT test-taking

strategies, and it conveys the importance of taking challenging courses. The program has worked wonders with many of the students as they discover what they want to do in life, and what it will take to get there.

Interview #8

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Head Counselor

2:30 p.m., January 10, 2001

Each year the head counselor of this high-performing high school takes the top 35 students in the senior class to Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin so that the students can learn more about the schools and compare them. Students return from the trip extremely excited about attending college, and their enthusiasm trickles down to the other students.

In order to encourage students to take challenging courses, when determining class rank, grades in AP and Dual Credit courses are multiplied by 6.5, whereas grades in other courses are only multiplied by 5.5. This affects students' class rank, which in turn affects which students are admitted under the state's top 10% automatic admission to state schools rule.

In order to meet the needs of students who have failed the TASP but still want to attend college, the school has created a TASP academy. Remedial courses designed to meet state requirements are offered on campus. Students typically take these courses for free during their senior year of high school instead of during their first year of college, thus saving the students time and money. Teachers offering the courses have received training from the local community college on how to get these students up to speed. The school also offers an after-school program for migrant workers and for students who have failed a course or courses.

The high school has extremely dedicated teachers. Quite a few former top students from the school, including two or three former valedictorians, have returned to teach there. The superintendent, the principal, and quite a few administrators are all former grads. The head counselor states that the key to the school's success is that the entire administration is local. "They know what we need. What we don't need is a bunch of New Yorkers telling us what we should be doing."

Interview #9

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: College Guidance Advisor

10:00 a.m., January 12, 2001

This high school seems to be doing everything that the most successful schools are doing in order to prepare students to attend college. At first glance, this finding seems quite surprising, considering that our statistical models identified this high school as one of the worst schools in the state at preparing students to attend college. What is going on? Apparently, we are not the only people capable of recognizing weaknesses in certain schools; some parents of children in schools also seem capable of this amazing feat. As a matter of fact, some parents with this amazing ability send children to this very high school.

Several years ago, the high school began receiving numerous complaints from parents that they were not doing an adequate job of preparing students for college. As a result of these complaints, the high school hired a new college guidance advisor to organize and run the college center in the new school facility which had just been built four years ago. The advisor had formerly worked at one of the top-performing schools identified in our study, where she had

started a college center for that school. The advisor began working as the college guidance advisor for her current district in May of 1999.

The college guidance advisor now has the College Guidance Center at this high school running like a finely tuned machine. Clearly labeled notebooks of information and applications for colleges line the walls. The largest group of notebooks contains information for every four year public and private school in the state. Next to this group are the notebooks for vocational and community colleges throughout the state, with an emphasis on schools in the region; next to this group are the notebooks for out-of-state colleges.

The college guidance center is roomy and well-organized, and the advisor commented that she has everything she needs to get the job done. She makes frequent class presentations, publishes a monthly newsletter, invites former students attending college to meet with students considering colleges, surveys seniors just before graduation to find ways to improve the center, organizes financial aid packets, supervises SAT and ACT registration and administration, organizes scholarship files, etc. She will even provide students with stamped envelopes for their applications. She states, "We try to make it very easy for students to apply.

If they do not go to college, it's because they don't want to go."

I suspect that we will soon see an increase in the number of students that this high school sends on to college.

Interview #10

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

12:30 p.m., January 11, 2001

This excellent high school is characterized by a positive attitude and dedication. The teachers provide students with additional tutoring before school, after school, during lunch, and on Saturdays. Students see the dedication of the teachers, respect them for it, and then desire to achieve at high levels themselves.

The counselor speaks fondly of all the teachers. She points out that the calculus teacher recently had 100% of his students pass the AP Calculus test, and that the history teacher has a one-on-one relationship with all of his students. The school has very strong, thorough, and organized department heads who meet weekly with the other teachers to discuss all concerns. The school does an excellent job of curriculum alignment. The counselor also

mentions that counselors and teachers receive excellent support from the administration. She compares the administration to a backbone, stressing that the administration makes sure that teachers have the resources and support they need. The administration treats the staff like professionals, and they set a standard for everybody else to follow. In other words, a family atmosphere permeates the campus, and students, teachers, and administrators feel like they are all in this together.

Despite the extremely high expectations and the good-natured competition among the students, the campus has a relaxed and comfortable feel. Instead of bells buzzing annoyingly, a pleasant chime sounds, signaling to the students not only that class is about to begin or end, but also that this is not your typical high school.

In addition to the excellent atmosphere on campus, a program called STARS has also contributed to student success. In the STARS program, each teacher is assigned to 12 to 15 students. The teacher is responsible for these students from their freshman year until they graduate. STARS is essentially an advisory period which focuses on attitude, motivation, personal skills, graduation requirements, or whatever else the teachers and counselors decide needs to be

covered. This sets a positive direction and allows students to bond with the teachers and the other students in their advisory period.

Interview #11

Gulf Coast, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

10:30 a.m., January 12, 2001

Several years ago, the parents, students, teachers, and administration at this low-performing high school felt a need to prepare students more thoroughly for college. In order to meet this need, the school made several changes. In 1996, the school purchased an SAT and ACT preparation course curriculum from Surescore. At least 15% of the students now take the test-preparation course for local credit, and among these students, test scores have improved greatly. Other recent changes include starting a college career center this year; paying for the AP tests for any student who has taken the course, increasing dramatically the number of students who take AP courses; offering a regional college fair on their campus instead of in Brownsville, doubling the number of students who attend the fair; hiring a specific counselor to cover all college advising responsibilities instead of

dividing up these responsibilities among all counselors; participating in the collegiate world series which provides two days of intensive college application training, essay writing assistance, and interviewing skills development; participating in the High Schools That Work program, which allows students and faculty to know what is needed in the real world; and participating in the "Gear Up" program, which is designed to increase college aspirations and awareness among junior high students. Who says public schools cannot respond to student and parental needs?

Interview #13

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Head Counselor

10:30 a.m., January 15, 2001

There is a big push at all schools in this top-notch school district for students to enroll in A.P. courses if they are college-bound. The initial placement for every student entering the ninth grade is in the college-bound, Texas recommended diploma track. This high school makes an active effort to vertically align kids, starting them out their freshman year in pre-A.P. courses and then keeping them on track until they take A.P. courses--A.P. courses and

college attendance being the final goals. Math and foreign language requirements appear to be the major obstacles preventing students initially on the academic plan from earning the recommended diploma. There is a push to get students into A.P. courses in general, but particularly into the A.P. courses that they will be successful in. A.P. courses are seen as a good way to introduce students to what will be required of them in college, and they make college completion more realistic, particularly since they reduce the cost of completing college. The students in A.P. courses are extremely competitive, but the competition appears to be friendly and constructive. Even the teachers are competitive with each other, and the preparation for TAAS exams borders on the maniacal, particularly since teachers and the community perceive that TAAS scores are the main criterion by which the school will be judged. The whole faculty is committed to TAAS, college preparation, etc. They want the kids to pass the TAAS and then move on to something better. Teachers offer tutoring sessions for the TAAS before school, after school, during lunch, and on Saturdays--total commitment. These committed teachers are self-motivated and would probably succeed given any administration, which makes it even easier to succeed with the good administration which

they do have. Educators here try very hard to go one step further than any requirement put out by TEA (for example, graduation requirements), and they have found that they are frequently doing things that the state will later require.

Quite frankly, the school has darn good teachers. The district encourages teachers to get college board training, and the district pays for teachers to attend college board training conference, covering all their expenses in the process. When the teachers return from the conferences, they are encouraged to pass on their training to other teachers in the school.

At this high school, the expectation is that all students will take the SAT and the ACT. In other words, the students never wonder if they will take the test, only what the specific date will be. To encourage this view, counselors meet individually with seniors at the beginning of the school year and ask them which specific date they are going to take the test. Counselors also encourage students to take the SAT and ACT early so students can apply for early admission, early admission applications having a higher rate of acceptance then normal applications. Counselors meet with UT and A&M admissions officers to see what they specifically want.

The high school receives good parental support, with parents encouraging their children to attend college and do better than they have in life. Parents are trying to buck the image of valley residents only being interested in agriculture.

UT Pan Am has been growing by leaps and bounds, and it offers attractive scholarships which have been persuading students to attend UT Pan Am. Concurrent enrollment helps prepare students for college by familiarizing students with what will be expected of them. Concurrent enrollment also reduces the cost of completing college.

In order for students to be successful in college, they must first be successful in high school. The high school has a freshman camp with the kids, the purpose of which is to orient kids and help them make the transition from middle school to high school. The counselors try not to overwhelm the kids, but they let them know what they will need in order to succeed and what they need to do in order to prepare for college. In some ways, this helps kids get the big picture.

Some students "stub their toe" as they progress down the path of high school. To address the needs of students who need to make up credits, the district created a fourth high school called "Options" which allows students to make up a

semester's worth of work, one class worth of work, or whatever. The school was originally designed for teen mothers, but the concept expanded to meet the needs of other students who need to make up some credits. This gives students another way to continue on the path which leads to college.

College and career centers with everything the students need to apply for college are located on all three of this school district's high school campuses. Co-step works with all three schools; Co-step puts on financial aid seminars and walks through the financial aid process with parents, helping parents fill out and submit FAFSA forms. Educators here encourage everyone to fill out this form--you never know what can happen. One counselor handles all of the scholarship information, including putting the information in a monthly senior newsletter. Small local scholarships are evidence of community support and also relieve some of the financial burden of attending college.

Interview #12

Rio Grande Valley, TX

Interviewee: Head Counselor

9:00 a.m., January 15, 2001

The number one key to the success of this high school is that educators treat everybody as if they were college bound. The initial placement for every student is the college-bound track. Proper placement in classes is important, and taking pre-A.P. and A.P. courses is highly encouraged. A specific junior-senior handbook outlining what tests need to be taken for college, etc., is given to every student at the beginning of the junior year. They follow the college board recommendations on testing, encouraging students to explore college options during their junior year so that they are ready to apply to specific colleges early in their senior year. Students are surveyed in September of their senior year to find out their plans; counselors then help them meet their plans, even down to reminding them when recruiters from schools which they are interested in will be visiting the campus.

Every six weeks they publish a senior newsletter containing a plethora of information about getting ready for college and using high school to prepare for college. They

also publish a High School senior calendar which contains college and financial aid information. They offer an SAT prep class for twenty-five dollars; it is given on weekends for ten hours. Counselors are encouraged to attend SAT prep courses, then they pass on the information to other counselors and teachers.

Parent volunteers work in the college room and give out scholarship information. Counselors gather detailed scholarship information, organize it effectively, and then publicize and pass the information on to students. Scholarship opportunities are broken down into local scholarships offered by community businesses and "remote" scholarships offered statewide or nationwide. Formal invitations for scholarship night are sent out to local business leaders, community leaders, etc., and they are also invited to a banquet beforehand. Educators at this high school are very involved with getting scholarships from the community, and they would say that they receive a great deal of community support. The local business community is very supportive of helping Hispanic students get to college, as is the Hispanic business community in the valley in general. (The school receives the support of the school board, parents, superintendent, and community leaders--it is a

combined effort.) Scholarship night is seen as a very big thing, and the superintendent requests a detailed report of which students receive what scholarships. "Finances" is seen as one of the major obstacles preventing minority students from attending college, particularly when students will be first-generation college attenders. This is why the school focuses so much on helping students get financial aid information and scholarship information. Counselors seek to help students think outside what they are capable of doing (dream), and then help students accomplish their dreams.

If students consider attending UT Pan Am or the local community college--schools which admit students without fixed deadlines--the counselor fills out the application with them on the spot and gets it sent out the same day. This way students will at least have this option to fall back on.

Given the school's high expectations for students, a sizeable percentage of incoming freshmen, even highly talented incoming freshmen, do not complete their freshman year; consequently, they do not enter their sophomore year as anticipated because they do not earn the required number of credits. In order to meet the needs of these students who were college bound in the ninth grade, the counselor requested and received a grant. The grant provided her with

funds enabling her to organize a club for these college-bound kids who are in danger of falling through the cracks. They meet together, go on college visits, etc. This allows the counselor to address any student needs which become apparent during their meetings and to help them develop skills they will need in order to be successful in high school and college. A halo effect is also created as college advisors meet with students and address them as "college-bound" students.

At the end of the year, counselors ask students to complete a survey on how satisfied students are with their counselors. The counselors then make goals at the end of the year based on the results. The results have risen steadily since implementing this program.

Interview #14

Houston, TX

Interviewee: Head Counselor

10:00 a.m., March 6, 2001

School #14 provides us with an excellent example of a school that is doing an outstanding job of preparing students for the TAAS, but an average job of preparing students for college. Not surprisingly, this school has made performance

on the TAAS their top priority.

Commitment to the TAAS begins with how the school schedules students' courses. As the head counselor stated, their "big secret is the way we schedule our kids." The school is on an accelerated block schedule; students attend four ninety-minute classes a day, five days a week. In the ninth and tenth grades, students take math and English courses all year. This allows students to be in top form when they take the TAAS toward the end of their tenth-grade year. While this scheduling appears optimal for preparing students for success on the TAAS, the head counselor noted that since going on the block schedule, the school "has seen a drop in SAT and ACT scores because students are not taking math and English their later years in school." She also mentioned that another danger of the block schedule is that if students have not taken math since the tenth grade, they are usually placed into remedial math if going on to college, costing students additional time and money.

If students have not passed the TAAS in the tenth grade, they must take math and English TAAS remediation courses. (Which course students take depends upon which portion of the test they did not pass.) The school also offers summer tutorials and summer TAAS preparation courses. Students are

expected to be there if they have not passed the TAAS, and the school contacts parents by letter and by phone to ensure student attendance. If students still do not show up, then counselors call them and hound them tenaciously.

For students who are struggling with the math portion of the TAAS, the school offers a self-paced math computer program called "Success Maker." The computer program goes clear back to first-grade math concepts. As students display mastery of a concept, the program proceeds to the next, more challenging concept. Although the computer program appears to utilize primarily "skill and drill" pedagogical techniques, a teacher is in the room to help students with any problems and to help explain math concepts.

One of the reasons why the school gets such outstanding results on the TAAS is that the school does an excellent job of communicating with parents and emphasizing how important the TAAS is. The school holds a TAAS night, during which parents are given information about the TAAS. During TAAS night, parents get on the school's computers to take release tests of the TAAS so that they can get a feeling for what their children are up against.

The school also holds a TAAS night especially for ESL students. The school has a number of teachers who are fluent

in English and Spanish (as well as a number of other languages), so communication with parents is never a problem. At the TAAS night, information is presented in both Spanish and English, and study tips are sent home with the parents. The school offers TAAS preparation courses with ESL teachers after school on a tutorial basis, for which students earn high school credit.

The list of special efforts the school makes to help students score well on the TAAS goes on and on: Teachers work twice a week during their preparation period in TAAS tutorials to help struggling students; students are taken from elective classes once or twice a week to receive additional TAAS preparation; students are given incentives such as free pizza, movie passes, and candy to attend after-school TAAS tutorials; the school provides breakfast and a pizza lunch when it holds "TAAS Saturday" two weeks before the real test, during which students can work on a computer with release TAAS tests, or they can work one-on-one with teachers; students do "TAAS warm-ups" (several practice TAAS questions from previous tests) the first few minutes of every class period in ninth and tenth grade; teachers record in a logbook how students score on practice tests which cover different concepts, and students receive additional

instruction during tutorials if they performed poorly on questions covering any specific concept; several weeks before the TAAS, students are pulled out of class one at a time by a TAAS specialist, assistant principal, area superintendent, or another administrator in order to go over their logbook with them, encourage them to attend tutorials to address any deficiencies, and to give them a pep talk.

This school is obviously doing an outstanding job of helping students perform well on the TAAS. The teachers and administrators have gone above and beyond the call of duty in helping students master the basic skills which the TAAS measures. The teachers and administrators obviously possess the organizational and pedagogical skills necessary in order to help students perform well on a test which is used by the state of Texas to accredit schools. If Texas decided to use SAT and ACT scores in addition to TAAS scores when accrediting schools, encouraging schools such as this one to place as much emphasis on SAT and ACT preparation as they do on TAAS preparation, one wonders what a dedicated, talented staff at a school such as this one would be capable of achieving.

Interview #15

Houston, TX

Interviewee: Grade 11 Counselor

10:00 a.m., March 7, 2001

Every now and then you meet a school administrator who is not afraid to tell it like it is. Such was the counselor at this low-performing school. She stated that there is no commitment to preparing students well for college, from the top administrators down to the classroom teachers. She recognized that support across the entire system must be strong, and her district simply does not have it. Vertical team meetings between teachers of different grades are not working very well, so there is no synergy between teachers. Teachers are not excited about what they are teaching, they are not sharing successful instructional strategies, and they are not receiving the support they need in order to be successful.

This apathetic attitude is even found among some of the AP teachers. The counselor stated that "teachers must make their AP courses come alive, make it relevant, make it like college bowl. Kids need a teacher who is enthusiastic, who is willing to go the extra mile. We have an AP teacher now who has the knowledge, but enrollment in the course she

teaches has gone from three classes to one class of fifteen students because she doesn't go the extra mile. She says, `That's the way it is, and if you don't like it, oh well.'" According to the counselor, the attitude of this AP social studies teacher mentioned above is typical. When the counselor approached the social studies teacher to suggest expanding the curriculum to include more current events and timely topics, the social studies teacher responded that the current curriculum was what was required of her; consequently, it was the curriculum she was going to stick with.

The level of commitment has not always been so low among the AP teachers. The school used to have a number of dedicated AP teachers who made a difference, but they left the school for higher salaries--two of the teachers now work for the AP program and two now teach in higher-paying districts. The flight of talented AP teachers has led to a decline in the number of students taking AP classes and to a decline in student scores on AP exams.

The counselor asserted that the main things that were keeping students from going to college were lack of experience and lack of confidence, especially among students of low socio-economic status. To help students gain more

experience and confidence, the school has a liaison counselor on campus from the nearby community college who helps students with concurrent enrollment and first-time enrollment. Students who have participated in concurrent enrollment courses have largely had positive experiences and make favorable comments to other students about the courses; however, many students are still finding it hard to break away from their families in order to attend a college away from home. Even if students do want to attend college, family needs often take precedence over a student's college aspirations. The counselor commented that when she recommends to parents that their son or daughter attend college, she often gets this response: "Yes, college is important, but my child needs to work." The top priority is putting food on the table, not getting a college education. Most of the students have after-school jobs, and most students work full time during the summer. Perhaps if families did not need their children to work in order to make ends meet, their children would be able to participate in summer and after-school programs designed to help students succeed in college.

Interview #16

Houston, TX

Interviewee: Counselor

1:00 p.m., March 7, 2001

The counselor at this school managed to work our interview into his busy schedule by meeting with the interviewer during lunch in the school cafeteria. The counselor apparently eats lunch in the cafeteria with the students rather frequently. During the interview he often stopped students who were walking by to ask them questions or to introduce them to the interviewer. The counselor obviously knew many of the students well and was aware of their individual talents and accomplishments, boasting about individual students to the interviewer while the student was present. The students obviously enjoyed hearing their praises being sung, and they appeared very comfortable when speaking with the counselor.

In addition to thinking very highly of the students, the counselor also thought very highly of the staff. He stated that they had "a heck of a staff" which he would compare with any school in the state. He thought that the teachers are extremely talented, and that the administration does an excellent job of helping the teachers and consequently the

students fulfill their full potential. The AP teachers in particular are extremely committed.

The school has an excellent relationship with the community, and the counselor thinks that this might be the key to their success. The town has only the one high school, and the community gets behind all of the school activities. Minority students participate in two clubs, the Heritage Society and Habla, both of which provide students with an opportunity to do volunteer work in the community. At the end of the year, students receive numerous service awards.

Probably the most striking thing about this school is that there is nothing striking about the school. It just seems like the type of school that, when parents hope their son or daughter will be able to attend a "good" public school, this is the kind of school they have in mind. The campus was well maintained and the buildings were attractive, but the physical facilities did not appear inordinately expensive. The school seemed to have good extra-curricular programs, but, judging from the counselor's comments and the interviewer's brief interactions with the students, students and staff alike appeared to place the most emphasis on academic achievement. (For example, right after the counselor introduced the "star running back" of the football

team to the interviewer, he told the student that he still wanted him to enroll in a challenging dual credit English course so that the student could earn some college credit and prepare himself better for college. The student obviously knew what the counselor was talking about, and he told the counselor that he would give it some more thought.) The teachers appeared talented and committed, but they were not an intellectual elite that had mysteriously congregated in this one school, turning talk among teachers in the break room into some kind of modern-day meeting of the Bloomsbury Group. The school simply appeared to do all of the things which a hopeful community expects a "good" school to do. And that is quite a bit.

Interview #17

Dallas, TX

Interviewee: Vice-Principal

8:30 a.m., March 13, 2001

This school effectively uses early intervention strategies to help at-risk students before their academic performance suffers irreversibly. Their early intervention strategies begin with the school looking at the grades and family backgrounds of all students to identify students who

have a high likelihood of dropping out. These students are then placed in courses where class sizes do not exceed 20 students. Teachers who are responsible for the students in these courses have an extra preparation period, giving them more time to counsel with students and parents.

Early intervention strategies continue with the district's "teaming" program. In this program, two teachers, one of which is an English teacher, have the same group of students. The teachers meet together to discuss student needs and to discuss what pedagogical techniques have been working effectively with certain students. These students also participate in a course designed to help them develop good study skills and organizational skills, with teachers using instructional materials such as the book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers*.

Students in the "teaming" program are also required to participate in at least one extra-curricular activity. The school offers a huge variety of extracurricular activities, ranging from traditional sports such as football to the Japanese animation club. Administrators are very supportive of any teacher who wants to start a club, and almost all teachers volunteer their time. The district picks up almost all of the cost for most activities, and sports participants

do not pay anything. A large percentage of the student body participates in at least one extra-curricular activity.

In addition to using effective early intervention strategies, administrators and teachers also do an excellent job of emphasizing that AP courses are open to everyone. The school offers almost every AP class, and pre-AP courses are offered all the way down to the middle-school level. As the school has sought to include more students in AP classes, teachers began noticing that some students simply were not ready for AP-level work yet. Rather than give up on these students, the school gives all students an assessment before they can enroll in AP courses. If students do not pass the assessment, they must take a six-week preparation tutorial before class starts so that they do not hold the rest of the class back.

Interview #18

Northeast TX

Interviewees: Two Counselors, Principal

1:30 p.m., March 13, 2001

This school is one of the top schools in the state for both preparing minority students for college and for preparing students to pass the TAAS. Two counselors and a

principal were interviewed at this school in an attempt to discover the keys to their success. Not surprisingly, this school does not do anything extremely out of the ordinary. The principal summed up the key to their success thus: "The bottom line is, we have good teachers and we stay on the kids."

Mystery solved. Or is it? Despite the principal's modest assessment of why the school is so successful, the school does utilize some unique strategies to boost student achievement. For example, teachers actively recruit students to take AP courses, assuring students that if they do not enjoy the course or find it too challenging, they are free to drop the course after six weeks if they so desire. (Counselors have arranged student and teacher schedules so that moving a student from an AP course to a normal course is no problem.) Being actively recruited to take an AP course builds a student's self-esteem as teachers express confidence in the student and make the student feel wanted. According to the school's counselor, "The AP teachers want any kid who is capable in there, but they don't force them."

Not surprisingly, one of the reasons why the school has a successful AP program is that they have a dedicated core of AP teachers who have been teaching the courses for years.

"It is their baby," said the counselor. Students know that the AP teachers take the courses extremely seriously and that they take pride in students' excelling on the AP tests. All three administrators interviewed commented that they try to interrupt the AP teachers as seldom as possible. "They go nuts when they are interrupted," said one counselor. "They want to cover everything that they are supposed to, and they want to make sure that the kids know the material backwards and forwards."

Put another way, the principal commented that the AP teachers are given "ownership" of their courses, and then the administrators get out of the way. Apparently the principal follows this leadership strategy when making most of his decisions. For example, the department heads decide who teaches which courses in their departments after consulting with the other teachers. "The department heads know [the other teachers'] strengths better than I do," he observed. The principal went on to comment that he had coached football for many years. As a coach he had learned that you need to surround yourself with good assistants and then give them the decisionmaking authority and capacity they need in order to get the job done. He follows the same strategy as an administrator.

Interestingly enough, one key to the school's success may not have been consciously planned by administrators: the school's size. The school size of about 580 students may help boost student achievement by being small enough for teachers to know almost all of the students well while still being large enough to allow for a certain degree of specialization, such as having a certified biology teacher to teach biology. The teachers know which kids have passed the TAAS, which kids are struggling in certain areas, which kids have done well on the SAT, etc. As with other successful schools in our study, the administrators commented that they had a loving school and that the teachers care about the kids.

Interview #19

Dallas, TX

Interviewee: Academic Coordinator

8:00 a.m., March 20, 2001

School #19 has found its IB program and its block scheduling format extremely effective. Students at the school usually start out in the full IB program in the ninth grade. The school does not limit enrollment to only full-program participants, however; if students find the program

overwhelming, they can then enroll in the limited program, focusing on areas of interest. Many of the students who enroll in the limited program wind up taking AP courses in their area of interest.

The academic coordinator asserts that the IB and AP teachers are wonderful, some of the best in the state. The district devotes "a lot of money on training" the IB and AP teachers. These highly trained teachers are also called upon to teach regular courses; by using the same methods and learning procedures which they use in the IB and AP programs, a trickle-down effect is created, and all students in the school benefit from the teachers' specialized training. Because the district devotes a considerable amount of money to training IB teachers, prospective IB teachers are asked to teach IB courses for one school year before receiving training the following summer. This allows teachers to make better use of their training, and it allows the school to decide whether or not the prospective teachers are a good fit for the IB program before the district spends money to train them. If the school decides a teacher is not a good fit for the IB program, the teacher is asked to teach a less demanding course.

In addition to its IB program, the school has also found

its block scheduling format extremely effective. Students take eight, ninety-minute courses for a full year, four courses a day. The academic coordinator contends that the ninety minute time block is critical, allowing teachers "time to cover higher-order concepts at high levels and time for drilling at lower levels." The block schedule gives teachers and students greater flexibility, it cuts down on the number of administrative tasks performed by teachers each day, and it cuts down on conflict between students because the students are not in the halls as often. The block schedule also forces successful teachers to alter their teaching strategies over the course of ninety minutes. Teachers have been instructed by the academic coordinator and other administrators to use at least three different learning strategies over the course of one period, devoting about thirty minutes to each strategy. Teachers are given one duty-free period a day, during which they are encouraged to contact parents, plan lessons, grade papers, and do whatever else it takes to get the job done.

The block schedule presents certain challenges and opportunities for teachers; it also presents certain challenges and opportunities for students. The academic coordinator suggested that the block schedule helps students

develop responsibility by forcing them to manage their time effectively. It also gives students time to see a teacher before their homework is due if they do not understand a concept. In other words, block scheduling helps students develop habits of personal responsibility and initiative which are critical for college success.

Interview #20

Dallas, TX

Interviewees: Two Counselors

2:00 p.m., March 20, 2001

School #20 boasts one of the best AP programs in the state. As you come through the doors of the school's main entrance, you immediately notice a magazine article attractively displayed between sheets of glass and arranged on a pedestal. The article ranks high schools' AP programs. Not surprisingly, this school is ranked #1 in the metropolitan area in which it is located for the percentage of students taking and passing AP exams.

How does the school get such widespread participation and eventual high achievement from its students? For starters, efforts to prepare students for success in AP courses begins in the early grades. Students are encouraged

to take pre-AP and honors courses in junior high, for which they receive high-school credit. In junior high, the district holds an AP night, during which students and parents receive information about the AP program, and its virtues are extolled. (This high school serves the entire district.) *All* students are encouraged to enroll in AP courses, and counselors emphasize that no selection criteria are used. "Come one, come all" seems to be the message to students, a message to which they are responding.

If talk of exciting courses, excellent teachers, and college credit is not enough to persuade students to enroll in AP courses, the school has another motivator up its sleeve--money. If a student gets a three or a four on an AP exam, the district pays that student $100 dollars; if a student gets a 5, the district pays that student $200 dollars. One can only imagine how getting paid for passing AP exams influences the attitude on campus toward high academic achievement. The fact that the district has chosen to use resources to reward academic achievement also says quite a bit about the district's priorities.

Once students are enrolled in AP courses, they seem to enjoy the experience, even if they are not doing well enough to pass the exams. If students are not doing well at the end

of the first semester, counselors meet with these students to see if they would prefer moving down to a regular course. Amazingly enough, the counselors find that even failing students usually choose to remain in the AP course. Students become attached to the friends and teachers in their AP courses, they enjoy the challenge, and they want an AP course on their transcript.

One of the reasons why this school's AP program has been so successful is that the district devotes resources to helping teachers receive additional training in gifted and talented education, beyond the training required by the AP program. The district emphasizes additional training for all of its teachers, not only those teaching AP courses. For example, all teachers at the school, regardless of whether or not they will be teaching AP courses, receive six hours of training every year in gifted and talented educational methods. The counselors agreed that this additional teacher training has helped boost the academic achievement of the entire student body.

Interview #21

Fort Worth, TX

Interviewees: Academic Counselor and Vocational Counselor

8:30 a.m., March 21, 2001

School #21 is a school in crisis. Prior to my interview with the academic counselor, the vocational counselor spoke with me briefly and showed me around the school of about 840 students. He introduced me to the baseball coach, who informed us that only eleven players had shown up at the last game, which they had lost sixteen to nothing. The coach was distraught about the lack of commitment among his players, but he found solace in the fact that one of the students had a very good reason for why he could not make it to the game--he had just been arrested. After telling us further tales of woe, the coach said, "No wonder I drink so much," then rushed off to class. The coach was a likable chap, but he seemed visibly discouraged by the sense of hopelessness permeating the school.

Ditto for the academic counselor whom I spoke with next. The academic counselor had only been at the school for about four years, and prior to his arrival, the school placed little to no emphasis on high academic achievement. In 1997, only two AP courses were taught; only four students took an

AP test; none of the students scored above a 3. Discouraged by these abysmal numbers, the academic counselor requested that at least five AP courses be offered the next year. Nearly all of the students failed these courses, however, because they did not have the academic foundation necessary in order to succeed on the AP exams. The counselor recognized that he was going to have to address the problem of vertical alignment of the curriculum from the earliest grades if the AP program was going to be successful. He said that this proved to be a formidable task for a variety of reasons.

To begin with, there was very little administrative commitment in the district to preparing students for success in AP courses and for success on the SAT or the ACT. The counselor observed that the district's focus on the TAAS has gotten in the way of long-range goals such as preparing students to attend college. He suggested that if schools were judged and rated by how many AP courses kids take, how well they do on the SAT or ACT, etc., then schools would reorder their priorities and place more emphasis on improving these measures of success.

Another obstacle to vertical alignment was the administrative task of getting all of the teachers of a given

subject in the same place at the same time. This administrative task was made more difficult because the teachers in the district were not enthusiastic about altering the curriculum. The counselor stated that many of the teachers had a curriculum with which they were comfortable, and they did not want to change. This lack of enthusiasm led to complaints and to the desire to be paid for any extra time spent on planning the new curriculum. The counselor seemed to be experiencing all of the frustrations experienced by administrators who try to get a program going when there is little enthusiasm for the program by the people who will have to implement the program, in this case, the teachers.

Perhaps the teachers would be more enthusiastic about increasing academic achievement in order to prepare students for college if parents in the district demanded high academic achievement. They do not. The counselor observed that very few parents think that it is realistic for their children to attend college. They would probably support a child's decision to attend college if they thought it was realistic, but they do not think it is realistic. Consequently, parents make little demands on the school to prepare their students well for college, and students appear all too willing to participate in the game of low expectations.

With most students, teachers, administrators, and parents willing to accept low academic achievement, one wonders where the impetus for change will come from, and if any proposals for change will be effective until broader support exists. For example, the school moved to a block schedule a number of years ago in an attempt to improve academic achievement, but the teachers were not ready to use ninety-minute periods effectively. They simply used the same teaching methods they used during fifty minute periods, and they covered the exact same material. The students appeared unmotivated to use ninety minutes effectively also. After realizing that block scheduling was not working effectively, the school moved back to fifty-minute periods. One attempt at reform down, an infinite number left to go.

Interview #22

Dallas, TX

Interviewees: Vice-Principal and Head Counselor

2:00 p.m., March 21, 2001

School #22 is a large high school in a large district. Like other schools in the district, they were having problems several years ago preparing minority students well for college. Fortunately, the District Improvement Committee

(which consists of parents, teachers, community leaders who do not have children in the district's schools, students, and central office administrators) recognized that students were not being prepared well for college, and they established some goals for the district's schools to attain. These goals included increasing the number of minority students in AP courses, increasing the number of students taking the SAT or ACT, and increasing parent and student awareness of college financial options. Since the district has identified and worked toward these goals, improvement has occurred in all three areas.

This anecdote is encouraging news for those who believe in the democratic responsiveness of public schools. It is also encouraging news for those who believe that, in order for an organization to be successful, goal consensus must exist among all those who are part of a given organization. The importance of identifying and agreeing to work toward a goal should not be underestimated.

The district has come up with a number of sensible proposals to help them meet their goals. For example, in order to help more minority students take AP courses, the district imposes no restrictions on who may enroll. The district has mandated that all students who take an AP course

must take the AP test for that course. Knowing that the cost of the tests can sometimes be burdensome for financially strapped students, the district pays the test fee for all students. Not surprisingly, since the district began mandating that students must take the AP tests, the number of students taking AP tests has risen dramatically.

Interestingly enough, in order to help the district meet its goals listed above, it has also established another goal -- doing a better job of retaining quality teachers. Attracting and retaining quality teachers has become more of a problem than it used to be in the district, and the district is attempting a number of initiatives to remedy the problem. For example, students of teachers who live outside of district boundaries may attend the district's schools. The district also now offers a more attractive health package for teachers than existed previously, and they pay $1,000 if a teacher has perfect attendance.

Although the district is taking steps to improve their performance, they recognize that there is still room for improvement. For example, administrators agreed that the district needs to do a better job of vertically aligning the curriculum. Currently, vertical alignment of the curriculum is more effective between elementary and junior high than

between junior high and high school. Hopefully the district will be able to meet the goals it identifies in the future as well as those it has identified in the past.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS FROM FIRST PORTION OF STUDY

In the previous chapter we tried to give the reader an impression of what each school we visited was like. We also tried to stress the contributions which each school made to our understanding of what increased the level of preparation for college among minority students. Obviously, if we had reported everything discussed at each interview, our interview reports would have become quite repetitive. Consequently, in the previous chapter we stressed the particular; in this chapter we stress the general. Examples from specific districts are used for clarification and writing-style purposes, but these are kept to a minimum and should not overly burden readers of the previous chapter. For those of you who skipped Chapter II in order to cut straight to the generalizations, welcome.

Educators at the highest-performing districts in the state almost universally acknowledged that increasing the number of students who go on to college was an explicit goal of the district; they also agreed that this goal received wide and enthusiastic support, from the superintendent all the way down to classroom teachers. As a result of

establishing this general goal, districts identified and established a series of subgoals to help prepare students more fully for college attendance, such as improving SAT and ACT scores and increasing the number of students who take Advanced Placement courses.

In order to increase the number of students taking the SAT and the ACT, high-performing school districts have implemented a number of strategies, including paying for all students to take the test at least once and making efforts to establish the school as one of the test sites. While the test-taking fee may not seem like a major obstacle to taking the SAT or ACT to middle-class adults, educators agreed that having the fee paid by the district helped many students take the test who otherwise would not have. Offering the school as a test site not only helped increase the number of students taking the test, but educators suggested that it also improved student scores because students were familiar and comfortable with their testing surroundings and did not have to get up as early as students who had to travel to an unfamiliar test site.

Interestingly enough, the highest-performing district pays for all of its students to take the PSAT, not the SAT. This makes all students eligible for National Merit

Scholarships and gives students practice with the basic SAT format. When the PSAT results are returned, counselors meet individually with each student and explain to them exactly what the results mean. This allows students to identify their weaknesses while they still have time in high school to improve them.

By increasing the number of students who take the SAT or the ACT, high schools also increase the number of students who receive college information directly from colleges. Colleges obtain lists of students who took the SAT or ACT from the test providers, and then mail information about the college to the students and invite them to apply. This not only increases a student's awareness of the options available, but it also increases a student's self-esteem and confidence as colleges write to them asking them to apply.

In order to improve student performance on the SAT or ACT, high-performing districts typically offer test preparation courses for local credit. These courses are usually taught by the districts' most experienced and talented math and English teachers. Several educators mentioned that in their schools only a small percentage of the students were taking these courses and that they would like to see more students enroll in them. Because only a

small percentage of the students are taking these courses in many districts, one may question the effect these courses are having on the average SAT or ACT scores. We think these courses are having a larger effect than many people realize, not only because they directly improve the scores of the small number of students taking the test, but because they signal to students, parents, and teachers that the district places a high priority on test preparation in particular and on preparing students for college in general.

Turning now to the question of what districts are doing in order to increase the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses, we find that the highest-performing districts have vertically aligned their curriculum from kindergarten through grade 12 with the expectation that *all* students will eventually take Advanced Placement courses in high school. If students are unable to meet this expectation, they are then moved into a lower track.

Vertically aligning the curriculum with the anticipation that all students will eventually take Advanced Placement courses represents a commitment to high expectations for students that goes beyond the high expectations rhetoric thrown around by many educators. It also offers several challenges, including having to offer a wide range of

Advanced Placement courses so that a district can align the curriculum in anticipation of these courses; if a district is going to align the curriculum in the anticipation that all students will eventually take Advanced Placement Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, U.S. History, European History, etc., then districts must offer these courses. The most successful districts do.

In addition to vertically aligning the curriculum, successful districts make active efforts to inform parents about the benefits of Advanced Placement courses. One successful high school holds an Advanced Placement information night every year that all students and parents are encouraged to attend. Attendance is usually superb. Counselors and Advanced Placement teachers basically do a sell job, with the teachers stressing how the Advanced Placement curriculum is challenging yet interesting, and with counselors stressing how passing scores on Advanced Placement tests can earn students college credit, which winds up saving parents money. Counselors and teachers also point out that all students are welcome to take Advanced Placement courses. Students must meet certain selection criteria in order to participate in gifted courses; no selection criteria exist for enrollment in Advanced Placement courses beyond the

desire to participate. Educators at several successful schools commented that many parents, particularly recent immigrants, those who dropped out of high school, and those who did not attend college, are unaware of the benefits of the Advanced Placement program.

After schools have encouraged students to take Advanced Placement classes, many districts encourage students to take the Advanced Placement tests by paying for the cost of the exam. The state of Texas already pays a portion of the fees; successful districts typically pay whatever portion remains. One extremely successful district even awards "Advanced Placement Scholarships." These scholarships pay students for passing scores; the higher the score, the more money the student receives. If a student gets a three or a four on an AP exam, the district pays that student $100. If a student gets a five, the districts pays that student $200. One can only imagine how getting paid for passing AP exams influences the attitude on campus toward high academic achievement.

In order to improve student performance in Advanced Placement courses and on Advanced Placement tests, almost all successful schools have implemented a block scheduling format. Under a block format, students typically take eight classes a year. Students take four classes on their "A" day

and four classes on their "B" day, and classes typically last about ninety minutes each.

Educators in schools with block scheduling noted that the Advanced Placement teachers love it because it gives them enough time to explore topics in depth without being constantly interrupted. Educators also mentioned frequently that the science teachers in particular find the block scheduling format extremely beneficial because it gives students enough time to perform labs and discuss the results with the teacher and other students.

We found the enthusiastic support for block scheduling, particularly among science teachers, extremely interesting. Educators noted that block scheduling reduces the amount of time spent on administrative tasks in the day, such as taking role, making announcements, etc. By reducing the amount of time spent on administrative tasks, teachers have the possibility of increasing the amount of time students spend "on task." Education research supports the conclusion that student achievement increases as the amount of time spent on task increases (Murphy 1986). Thus, block scheduling allows teachers to increase student performance by increasing the amount of time students spend on task. Of course, students must still make effective use of the time spent on task.

This is where the importance of skilled and talented teachers comes in.

The block scheduling format demands a large degree of preparation and pedagogical expertise from teachers. In order to maintain student interest and increase the level of learning, teachers need to vary their instructional strategies, perhaps using three or four different strategies within the given ninety minutes; a teacher who lectures for the full ninety minutes is doomed. Teachers often vary their instructional strategies across a variety of dimensions, including how teacher centered or student centered, structured or unstructured the strategy is. While the most talented teachers will adjust their instructional techniques according to the needs of their particular students, much of the literature on minority academic achievement suggests that students in urban settings benefit from "structured learning environments" (Murphy 1986, 504).

The finding that minority students benefit from structured learning environments assumes increasing importance when linked with our finding that science teachers enjoy the block scheduling format the most. Science labs automatically provide a structured learning environment which allows students to become actively involved in the learning

process. In other words, labs can provide hands-on, student-centered, active reinforcement of abstract concepts originally presented through teacher-centered instructional techniques. Labs thus allow science teachers to vary their pedagogical techniques while still providing a structured learning environment. These general principles regarding effective instructional strategies which are gleaned from the experiences of science teachers can benefit teachers in other content areas as well. Apparently the most successful teachers in the most successful schools use a variety of instructional strategies and learning techniques while still maintaining the structured learning environments associated with high academic achievement among minorities.

The most successful districts have clearly made a commitment to preparing students for success on college entrance exams and for success in Advanced Placement courses, and they devote time and resources in order to meet this commitment. The least successful districts have not made such a strong commitment. Interestingly enough, many of the educators interviewed in the low-performing districts said that they would like to place a higher emphasis on preparing students for college, but they often faced opposition from top-level administrators. The reason why many administrators

are hesitant to place higher emphasis on preparing students for college is that they do not want to take any emphasis away from preparing students for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

The TAAS is a basic skills test which Texas students must pass in order to receive their high school diploma. TAAS scores, in combination with student attendance and dropout rates, are used to rank and accredit Texas high schools. People in the community are well aware of the accreditation status of their school, and administrators face tremendous local pressure to increase TAAS scores in order to increase their school's accreditation status.

While we salute Texas' efforts to improve the basic skills of their students, our research suggests that some schools develop a maniacal obsession with increasing their students' TAAS scores to the point that it limits their ability to prepare students well for college. Numerous educators in low-performing schools commented that their districts focused on helping students develop the basic skills measured by the TAAS rather than focusing on helping students develop the higher-order thinking skills measured by college entrance exams and necessary for success in Advanced Placement courses. Perhaps if the state of Texas expanded

the number of criteria used to accredit schools to include some of the measures of college preparation we use in this study, schools would alter their priorities accordingly.

Focusing on the TAAS rather than on preparing students for college is not the only characteristic of low-performing schools. Low-performing schools also appear to have more than their fair share of untalented or uncommitted teachers. When visiting top-performing schools, we frequently heard about how excellent the teachers were: "We have a heck of a staff," "We just have great teachers," "I would compare our teachers to any in the state." When visiting low-performing schools, counselors and other administrators rarely said anything positive or negative about the teachers. Occasionally, however, a bold interviewee would tell it like it was.

For example, one counselor admitted that there was no commitment to preparing students well for college, from the top administrators down to the classroom teachers. When the counselor approached one AP social studies teacher to suggest expanding the curriculum to include more current events and timely topics, the social studies teacher responded that the current curriculum was what was required of her; consequently, it was the curriculum she was going to stick

with. According to the counselor, the attitude of this AP social studies teacher is typical of the attitude among the rest of the teachers at the school: the teachers are doing the minimum required of them, and that is it.

A counselor at another school admitted that most of the teachers were comfortable with the status quo and were reluctant to adopt more effective teaching practices. For example, the school moved to a block schedule a number of years ago in an attempt to improve academic achievement, but the teachers were not ready to use ninety-minute periods effectively. They simply used the same teaching methods they had used during fifty-minute periods, and they covered the exact same material. After realizing that block scheduling was not working effectively, the school moved back to fifty-minute periods.

The experience of the school mentioned above suggests that effective programs, policies, and procedures by themselves will not boost student academic achievement. Apparently, programs, policies, and procedures must be implemented by talented, committed teachers, or else the desired results will not be achieved. Programs alone will not guarantee good results; talented teachers alone will not produce good results. The highest-performing schools have

both, and they consequently do an excellent job of helping students succeed on the measures of college preparation we use in our study.

Of course, schools which are highly committed to preparing minority students for college do more than just help students succeed on the measures of college preparation we use in our study. They do whatever is necessary to prepare students for college and to encourage them to attend the postsecondary institution which will best suit their needs. The most successful schools at preparing minority students for college do the following: 1) encourage students to enroll in dual credit classes, 2) increase students' enthusiasm for attending college, 3) increase the level of college and financial aid information given to parents, and 4) increase the level of community support for college attendance.

The successful schools in our study had large percentages of students participating in dual credit classes. Dual credit classes allow students to take challenging courses while still in high school, for which they receive credits toward their high school diploma and credits toward a college diploma. The educators we interviewed identified several benefits of dual credit courses.

First, they provide students with a challenging intellectual experience which helps them develop higher-order thinking skills. The development of higher-order thinking skills allows them to do well on college entrance exams and is essential to long-term success in college.

Second, dual credit courses familiarize students with the college experience and give them confidence that they can handle a college-level curriculum. Many of the most successful schools have excellent dual credit arrangements with local community colleges. Many schools also offer dual credit courses on the high school campus by having their own qualified high school teachers teach the courses. (In order for high school teachers to be qualified, they must meet the hiring standards of the cooperating community college, which usually means that they have received at least some graduate school education.) For many students, particularly those who come from families where the parents and siblings have not attended college, dual credit courses appear to be an excellent way of introducing students to the college experience.

Third, dual credit courses allow students to save money. By working toward a college degree while still in high school, students are able to graduate from college earlier,

thus reducing the opportunity costs of attending college. Also, the courses for which they receive credit from the cooperating community colleges have very modest fees, and many of the highest-performing districts in our study pay the fees for the students if they pass the courses. Given that a high percentage of minority students come from impoverished backgrounds, the importance of reducing the costs of attending college becomes critical.

Taking dual credit and community college courses is an excellent way for students to reduce college costs. High-performing schools recognize, however, that they need to encourage students to consider a range of post-secondary education options. Therefore, they encourage students to consider eventually attending four-year universities through a variety of strategies. What schools do to increase enthusiasm for attending four-year universities varies from school to school; what seems to be important is not the exact nature of the strategy used, but rather that it instills in students a palpable enthusiasm for attending college. For example, one school on the Texas-Mexico border takes every student in the top ten percent of the senior class on a district-paid trip to visit Texas A&M and the University of Texas. For many students, it is their first time leaving the

Rio Grande Valley. The counselor who takes the students every year says that the students always have a wonderful time, and when they return to the high school, they tell the other students about their experiences and impressions.

Successful schools use a variety of strategies to encourage students to consider attending four-year universities. They also use a variety of strategies to increase parents' knowledge of college and financial aid options, to increase the level of community support for college attendance, and to make sure students do not fall through the cracks.

To increase parents' knowledge of college and financial aid options, successful schools perform routine tasks such as sending college information home in both Spanish and English. Successful schools also do whatever is necessary to help students qualify for financial aid, including holding special financial aid nights when counselors and other school officials help parents and students fill out financial aid forms. Some districts even have accountants at the financial aid nights to help recent immigrants file their taxes promptly so that they can qualify for financial aid in time to help their son or daughter attend college. To increase the level of community support for college attendance,

excellent districts often place students in work-study programs with businesses that require college-educated employees. After internships with these businesses, students receive a better awareness of the skills which are required for employment in today's economy. Employees of these businesses also visit the schools, speaking to groups of students and helping them realize what will be required educationally from them if they want to pursue a career in a given field. Often these cooperating businesses also award academic scholarships. The amount of the scholarships in dollars is usually fairly modest, but every bit of financial aid helps, and the symbolic support for higher education from prominent businesses and members of the community is invaluable.

Conclusions from First Portion of Study

Throughout the state of Texas, some school districts do an excellent job of preparing minority students for college, and they devote a considerable amount of time, energy, and resources to this task; some do not. Interestingly enough, the districts that provide the best college preparation for minority students have not made preparing *minority* students

for college a priority; rather, they have made preparing *all* students for college a priority. This does not mean that these districts coerce students into thinking that attending a four-year university is their only post-secondary option; rather, they ensure that every student has had every educational opportunity made available to them, and if students decide to pursue post-secondary options other than attending college, their decisions are not influenced by the fact that the schools they attended did not offer them the opportunity to prepare well for college.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF SUPERINTENDENT REPRESENTATIONAL STYLE ON COLLEGE PREPARATION LEVELS AMONG MINORITY STUDENTS

In the first three chapters of this study, we identified policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices that administrators in the highest-performing schools in the state felt contributed to increasing levels of college preparation among minority students in Texas. As noted earlier, the efforts of educational researchers exploring minority academic achievement have tended to focus on black students in urban areas. The first portion of our study has made a modest contribution to current educational research addressing minority academic achievement by 1) including Hispanic students in the study, 2) expanding the range of educational settings explored to include urban, rural, and suburban districts, and 3) focusing on the high-end academic achievement that makes college attendance possible.

Although the first portion of the study has contributed to our understanding of what educators are doing to increase college preparation levels among minority students, we believe our understanding in this area can be enlarged further in the second part of our study by doing the

following: 1) viewing minority college preparation (and, consequently, college attendance) as a positive externality, and 2) exploring the effect of superintendent representational style on the generation of positive externalities (specifically, black and Hispanic student preparation for college) by using research methods amenable to meaningful hypothesis testing.

Viewing College Preparation by Minorities as a Positive Externality

Earlier research on minority academic performance has largely been conducted by researchers in schools of education. While these researchers have made important contributions to our understanding of minority academic performance, we believe that this understanding could be incomplete because these researchers failed to view college preparation among minority students as a positive externality. The failure to view college preparation among minority students as a positive externality has led these researchers to focus on pedagogic rather than political explanations to the question of why some school districts do a better job of preparing minority students for college than

do others.

Before we explain how we will look to political explanations to understand more fully variation in college preparation levels among minority students, we must first establish that high levels of college preparation among minority students is indeed a positive externality. Many of the arguments which follow appeared in the first portion of our study when we were explaining why college preparation among minority students was worth studying. They bear repeating here because the argument that high levels of minority college preparation--and, consequently, higher college attendance rates among minorities-is beneficial to society at large and should therefore be viewed as a positive externality is central to our research in the second portion of this study and worth examining from this perspective in some detail. (As we discuss minority preparation for college, we will frequently shift from discussing minority preparation for college to discussing minority attendance at college. The college aspirations literature finds that the higher the level of college preparation among students, the higher the college attendance rate (see, e.g., Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999).)

One reason why high minority college attendance rates

should be viewed as a positive externality and in the long-term interests of society is that college attendance is positively associated with levels of civic engagement and the development of social capital. College graduates are more likely to vote and utilize new technologies. College graduates are less likely to engage in criminal activities (Bowen 1977; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991). College attendance prepares minority students to assume leadership roles in their community and to participate vigorously in our democracy. Bowen and Bok (1998) point out that the "active recruitment of minority students that began in the 1960s was motivated by more than a conviction that the enrollment of a diverse student body would improve the educational process for everyone. It was also inspired by a recognition that the country had a pressing need for well-educated black and Hispanic men and women who could assume leadership roles in their communities and in every facet of national life" (156).

Using the College and Beyond dataset (an extensive survey of matriculants at 28 selective universities), Bowen and Bok find that students who attended elite colleges participated in civic activities at higher rates than did students in the control group who attended any four-year college; and students who attended any four-year college

participated in civic activities at higher rates than did students who had not attended any four-year college (156, 157). The findings are clear: The higher the education level, the more likely a person is to participate in civic activities; and the better the quality of the university attended, the more likely a person is to participate in civic activities.

Bowen and Bok point out that black students who attended elite universities were even more active in civic endeavors than their white classmates (158). This finding suggests that minority communities have a critical need for talented, educated individuals to assume leadership roles. The situation becomes even more acute when we acknowledge that disadvantaged communities are greatly affected by government programs and policies, yet members of these communities are less likely to participate in the political process (Leighley 2001). Bowen and Bok explain the situation thus:

> [I]mportant opportunities exist for highly trained minority managers and professionals in meeting the pressing needs in predominantly minority communities. At present, minority groups are disadvantaged in government and politics because they are less likely to vote than the rest of the population. This is especially true in poor communities, where voting rates have been falling for three decades and are now far below the national average. Because these communities have such a vital stake in public policies involving

> health care, welfare, law enforcement, job training, education, and other areas, it is especially important that they have well-trained, articulate leaders to represent them in the political arena (12).

The need for college-educated, well-trained minority leaders will become even greater in the United States of the future. According to projections in the 2000 census, minority groups will comprise about 48% of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). If capable members of these minority groups do not assume leadership positions in the United States of the future, confidence in government will wane in minority communities. Without elected officials to represent them, minorities may increasingly believe that they are unable to influence the workings of government through normal political processes.

In addition to the reasons discussed above, our society has another reason to view higher college attendance rates among minorities as a positive externality. Race relations remain among our society's greatest problems (Carmines and Stimson 1989). While all of our society's race-relations problems will not be solved by increasing the number of minority students who attend college, survey evidence suggests that students acquire valuable skills at college that help them interact better with members of other races

(Bowen and Bok 1998).

For all of the reasons mentioned above, high levels of college preparation among minority students should be viewed as a positive externality. Economists have long recognized positive externalities as a market failure warranting government intervention (Kraft and Furlong 2004). Because college attendance benefits students of all races as individuals, regardless of the beneficial aspects of college attendance for society at large, students, parents, and others will request that school districts increase college preparation levels to some degree. However, since college preparation (particularly among minority students) benefits society as a whole, we will get "less" of it as a society than we would desire if people act solely in their own self-interest. Once this fact is acknowledged it forces us to consider not *what* a school district is doing to increase college preparation levels among minority students but rather *why* a district has chosen to increase college preparation levels among minority students more than other school districts do. In other words, instead of focusing on the programs, policies, procedures, and pedagogical practices that a district is using to increase minority college preparation levels, we need to go back one chain further on

the causal link to explore why a district has decided to increase minority college preparation levels in the first place. In the first portion of our study, we found that educators at the highest-performing districts in the state almost universally acknowledged that increasing the number of students who go on to college was an explicit goal of the district. In the following section we will argue that the reason why some school districts have decided to increase minority college preparation levels is that they are led by a superintendent who views his or her representational role as that of a trustee.

Superintendent Representational Style: Delegates versus Trustees

Before we begin considering the effect of superintendent representational style on college preparation levels among minority students, we must first explain why we should not look to school boards first in our attempt to explain the generation of positive externalities in general. While it is true that school boards and school superintendents are the two parties responsible for establishing most district-wide policies (Dye and MacManus 2003), we should not expect school

boards to act in the long-term interests of society for two main reasons. The first is that many school board members are often the parents of children in the school system (Wirt and Kirst 103, 1997). Consequently, they will be more concerned with the future of their own children than the future of society at large. The second reason is that school board members are rarely professionally trained educators who are well versed in the educational literature. As a result, they may be unaware of the possible long-term benefits for society of many educational decisions. For example, a board member who is unaware of the long-term benefits to society of high levels of college preparation among minority students might be inclined to favor vocational programs for minority youths under the assumption that society will be best served if such students are prepared to enter the marketplace rather than the university.

We are not alone in questioning the capacity of school boards to act in the public interest. Educational historians such as David Tyack (1974) have pointed out that even if independent school districts were created with the intention that civic-minded people would serve on the school board, in practice we have fallen short of that ideal. For example, Tyack states that “Whereas schoolmen [professional

administrators] often denigrated nomination of teachers by school board members as 'patronage' and desired to build meritocratic hierarchies controlled by professionals, many laymen saw teaching as a good job for the girls in the ward and the power of appointment as the natural prerequisite of office for board members. (Why otherwise would men donate their time?)" (79).

In contrast to school boards that are composed of laypeople serving on a part-time basis, superintendents are professionally trained administrators who devote all of their time to running the district's schools. As a result of their professionalism and expertise, superintendents have come to exercise a great deal of control over policy determination and implementation. Dye and MacManus (2003) have succinctly and lucidly summarized much of the literature surrounding the relationship between school boards and superintendents as follows:

> Democratic theory assumes that schools are public institutions that should be governed by the local citizenry through their elected representatives. This was the original concept in American public education developed in the nineteenth century. However, as school issues became more complex, the knowledge of citizen school boards seemed insufficient to cope with the many problems confronting the schools—teaching innovations, curricular changes, federal and state mandates, multimillion-dollar building programs,

> special education programs, and so forth. Over time, school superintendents and their administrative assistants came to exercise more and more control over the day-to-day operations of the schools. Theoretically, superintendents only implement the policies of the board, but in practice they have assumed much of the policy making in local school districts. Superintendents keep in touch with the university schools of education; devote full time to their job; receive direct advice from attorneys, architects, accountants, and educational consultants; and generally set the agenda for school board meetings (534).

As we can see, superintendents possess an extensive amount of knowledge regarding educational issues and they possess the policymaking capacity to act on that knowledge if they see fit. As a result of their professional training, superintendents should be aware of the possible long-term benefits for society of many educational decisions, such as the decision to increase college preparation levels among minority students.

The foregoing argument and the existing literature that examines the relationship between school boards and superintendents (see, e.g., Wirt and Kirst 1997) suggest that superintendents dominate the relationship between school boards and superintendents and are the most important policymakers in the district. In addition to the existing literature, the first portion of our study also suggests that

superintendents exert a much larger influence over policymaking in school districts than do school boards. The educators we interviewed at the highest performing school districts frequently mentioned top-level administrators in the district and their commitment to preparing students for college. According to the educators we interviewed, top-level administrators in the highest performing districts implemented policies that they felt would improve college preparation levels among students; they then gave teachers and other educators the support and guidance they needed in order to perform their jobs successfully.

Some of the educators we interviewed in low-performing school districts did mention school boards, but when they did, the picture they painted was one in which the school board/schoolmen relationship, to use Tyack's terms, was easily dominated by the schoolmen. For example, in one low-performing school district we visited in San Antonio, the school board responded to parental complaints about low student academic performance by requiring educators in the district to meet with the school board and provide some kind of an explanation for why student academic achievement was so low in the district. Once educators provided some kind of an explanation, the school board was appeased, and the school

board continued to provide little influence over district policymaking.

Although the following argument and the existing literature suggest that superintendents have the potential to dominate the school board/superintendent relationship, and although superintendents possess the capacity and knowledge to act in the long-term interests of society, superintendents must still decide whether they will use their own professional training and expertise to guide their policy decisions or whether they will defer to the wishes of the school board. In other words, superintendents must choose to act as delegates, trustees, or some combination of the two (Davidson 1970; Kuklinski and Elling 1977; Mann 1976).

Representational concepts have been used by political scientists for years, and exactly what is meant by “delegate” or “trustee” may vary to some degree among political scientists. Although we will not be able to settle the disagreements here, a short discussion of what is generally meant by the terms is in order at this point. If constituents express preferences to their representative, a delegate is expected to cater to the expressed preferences of those constituents. As Mann (1976) puts it, “A delegate . . . is guided by expressed citizen preferences, even at the

expense of his own best judgment" (11). In contrast, "Trustee decision-making is dominated by the trustee's personal judgment and professional experience. The trustee does what the trustee thinks is best for the children, community, clientele, and constituents" (15). Because trustees do not always give their constituents whatever the constituents want whenever the constituents want it, trustees could theoretically use their knowledge and wisdom to act in the long-term interests of their constituents or in the interests of society at large, not just their constituents. If citizens should request something that is in their best long-term interests or in the interests of society at large, a trustee will naturally yield to their request. To understand these concepts more fully, and to begin using terms which will be directly relevant to our study, superintendents who seek to neutrally implement whatever policies have been previously decided by the school board are behaving more like delegates; superintendents who seek to implement policies in harmony with their own professional knowledge and expertise are behaving more like trustees.

As mentioned earlier, since school board members are mainly laypeople with children in the public schools, we should not expect them to have either the motivation or the

knowledge necessary to advocate policies that generate positive externalities, including college preparation among minority students. Consequently, if a superintendent views his representational role as a delegate and defers to the judgment of the school board, he will be unable to act in the long-term interests of society; conversely, if a superintendent views his representational role as a trustee and relies on his own professional knowledge and expertise when determining and implementing policy, he will be able to act in the long-term interests of society. In other words, the foregoing argument suggests that the more a school superintendent views his role as a trustee, the greater the generation of positive externalities in his school district should be. Since we have determined that college preparation levels among minority students are an excellent example of a positive externality, we are now prepared to explore whether superintendent representational style has an effect on the generation of positive externalities in general by exploring whether superintendent representational style has an effect on college preparation levels among minority students in particular.

Data and Methods

Our main hypothesis is that the more a school superintendent views his or her role as a trustee, the higher the college preparation level among minority students in his or her district will be. To test this hypothesis, we will analyze two data sources using Ordinary Least Squares, Multivariate Regression Analysis. The first source is data collected on every school district in Texas every year by the Texas Education Agency described in the first part of our study. As mentioned earlier, this database, commonly referred to as "Snapshot," contains a variety of useful measures, including student characteristics, standardized test scores (overall and broken down by minority groups), staff characteristics, teacher characteristics, taxes, budgeted revenues, and budgeted expenditures aggregated at the district level. We will analyze this data for the school year ending in 200l. The second source is a superintendent survey conducted by the Texas Educational Excellence Project, an on-going research program located within the Political Science Department at Texas A&M University that examines questions of equity, representation, and governance in public education. The superintendent survey was sent to every

public school superintendent in Texas in the 1999-2000 school year, and the response rate was a very respectable 55%.

The Trustee Measure

The survey contains three questions designed specifically to measure the degree to which a superintendent views himself or herself as a delegate or trustee: 1) A superintendent should maintain a neutral stand on any issues on which the community is divided; 2) A superintendent should act as an administrator and leave policy matters to the board; and 3) A superintendent should advocate policies to which important parts of the community may be hostile. For each question, superintendents were asked to check one of four possible responses: strongly agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and strongly disagree.

Superintendents who strongly disagree with questions one and two view their role more as trustees than as delegates. Questions one and two were coded on a scale from one to four as follows: strongly agree = 1, tend to agree = 2, tend to disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 4. Superintendents who strongly agree with question three view their role more as trustees than as delegates. Question three was also coded on

a scale from one to four, but the number assigned each response differs from the earlier coding as follows: strongly agree = 4, tend to agree = 3, tend to disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1. Note that on each question, the higher the number, the more a superintendent views himself or herself as a trustee. The three separate measures were then added to produce our final measure of the degree to which a superintendent views himself or herself as a delegate or trustee. For simplicity's sake, this measure will be referred to as the "trustee measure" throughout the remainder of this paper.

Because not all of the superintendents answered every question on the survey, we obtained a trustee measure for 526 out of the 562 returned surveys. This still represents a very respectable percentage of superintendents throughout the state. The range on our measure runs from a minimum of three to a maximum of twelve. The mean for the measure is 8.09 with a standard deviation of 1.33. The trustee measure contains enough variation that lack of variation on our independent variable of interest should not hinder our ability to find a relationship between superintendent representational style and minority preparation for college, if such a relationship does in fact exist.

Dependent Variables: College Preparation Level Measures

As in the first portion of our study, we will rely on a number of different dependent variables to measure the level of college preparation among minority students. Each one of these dependent variables measures different but related elements of college preparation among minority students. According to the interviews conducted in the first portion of our study, superintendents who act as trustees should be capable of implementing policies which will improve minority performance on each one of these college preparation measures. We will now describe each measure and give examples from the first portion of our study of policies which superintendents who view themselves as trustees can implement or encourage which should increase minority performance on each measure.

The first measure is the percentage of all black students in a district taking the SAT or the ACT in the year 2001, and the second measure is the percentage of all Hispanic students in a district taking the SAT or the ACT in the year 2001. (All of the performance measures described in this portion of the study will be from the school year ending in 2001 unless otherwise noted; also, all data will be

aggregated at the district level.) Superintendents committed to increasing the number of minority students who take college entrance examinations can implement policies such as paying for all students to take the test at least once and making every attempt to establish the school as one of the test sites. Although the test-taking fee may not seem like a major obstacle to taking the SAT or the ACT to most middle-class parents and may not seem like a major obstacle to many superintendents, administrators we interviewed acknowledged that having the fee paid by the district helped many students take the test who otherwise would not have. Establishing the school as a test site should also help more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds take the test who may face more transportation concerns than students from wealthier backgrounds.

The third measure is the black student average on the SAT; the fourth measure is the Hispanic student average on the SAT. The fifth is the black student average on the ACT; the sixth is the Hispanic student average on the ACT. To improve student performance on the SAT or the ACT, superintendents can implement policies which will allow students to take test preparation courses for local credit. This allows students from low-income backgrounds (during

school hours and for no additional fees) to benefit from the same kinds of test-preparation curricula that have long been offered to students from wealthier backgrounds after school at some financial cost.

Our seventh measure is the percentage of all black students taking an Advanced Placement course; our eighth, the percentage of all Hispanic students taking an AP course. To increase the number of minority students taking AP courses, superintendents can encourage administrators throughout the district to vertically align the curriculum with the expectation that all students will eventually take AP courses in high school. Because of the nature of public school organization, with numerous elementary schools feeding into fewer middle schools which feed into still fewer high schools, vertically aligning the curriculum with the expectation that all students will take AP courses in high school is an excellent example of a policy which must be coordinated on a district-wide basis. A superintendent who is committed to increasing college preparation levels among minority students is in an excellent position to successfully lead the coordination effort.

The ninth measure is the percentage of all black students taking at least one AP test; the tenth, the

percentage of all Hispanic students taking at least one AP test. (This measure also includes the very small percentage of black and Hispanic students who take International Baccalaureate tests as well. Since the IB program, like the AP program, represents a rigorous academic curriculum typically taught by the district's best teachers for college credit, including IB test takers with AP test takers is appropriate for our analysis.) Superintendents can implement a variety of policies to increase the number of minority students taking AP tests, such as using district funds to pay for the cost of the exam. The state of Texas already pays a portion of the fees, but superintendents can encourage more students to take the exam by paying the remaining portion. District funds can also be used to pay "scholarships" to students who pass the exam, with larger scholarships being given for higher scores.

The percentage of minority students who are taking dual credit courses is not included as one of our measures of the level of college preparation in a district. We have two main reasons why we did not include this measure. The first reason is that dual credit enrollment rates can be greatly affected by how close the local community college is to the high school campus: the closer the community college, the

higher the dual credit enrollment rates, holding everything else constant. While we believe that superintendents can have a significant influence over many policies in their district and how effectively those policies are implemented, determining the location of community colleges is generally beyond a superintendent's control. The second reason why we did not include this measure is that students who are trapped in a failing district--full of incompetent teachers and administrators and inadequate facilities--may participate in dual credit courses more in order to escape from the drudgery which is their daily school life.

To summarize, our ten measures of the level of college preparation among minority students are: 1) the percentage of all black students taking the SAT or the ACT, 2) the percentage of all Hispanic students taking the SAT or the ACT, 3) black student average on the SAT, 4) Hispanic student average on the SAT, 5) black student average on the ACT, 6) Hispanic student average on the ACT, 7) the percentage of all black students taking an AP course, 8) the percentage of all Hispanic students taking an AP course, 9) the percentage of all black students taking at least one AP test, and 10) the percentage of all Hispanic students taking at least one AP test.

Before proceeding to the next portion of our study, we must note that we checked all the dependent variables to ensure that they did not violate any of the assumptions of OLS. After examining the distributions of all ten variables, we found that variables 7-10 were skewed to the right, thus violating the assumption of OLS that the dependent variable is normally distributed. In order to correct for this violation, we added one to the value reported by the district and then took the log transformation of that new variable. This procedure brought the variables into much greater agreement with the assumptions of OLS.

Control Variables

The choice of what control variables to include in our model must be consistent with our understanding of what it means for a superintendent to be acting as a trustee. In order for superintendents to be acting as trustees in any meaningful sense of the term, they must exercise considerable discretion. They must be able to use their professional training and expertise to influence board members, other district administrators, teachers, parents of students, and even citizens of the district without children in the public

schools. A superintendent who views his or her role as a trustee, and is committed to acting both in the public interest and in the long-term interest of the district's students, must be a dynamic, politically savvy leader who is capable of generating sustained support for his or her policies among district employees and also among citizens of the district. According to this view, the superintendent has the capacity to have the most influence of any single person in the district on district policies and the level of support for those policies. This is one of the main points of our study-that superintendents are an excellent example of administrative elites who can have a major impact on public policies.

To summarize our position, we favor the view that superintendents, if they choose to do so, have the capacity to have a significant impact on the level of college preparation among minority students in their district. Increasing the level of college preparation among minority students requires a determined effort on the part of the superintendent, an effort which must include altering many of the conditions under which the district is operating and implementing policies which affect the characteristics of the teachers employed in the district. We will now describe how

this view of the superintendent as an active policymaker with considerable discretion has guided our model specification.

One of the most important constraints under which superintendents function is the availability of financial resources. Consequently, the first control variable in our model is the taxable property value per pupil. We have chosen to include this measure of available financial resources rather than several other possible measures, such as total budgeted revenue per pupil and total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil, for one very important reason: the taxable property value per pupil cannot be influenced by a superintendent. Other measures of financial resources, such as total budgeted revenue per pupil and total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil, can theoretically be influenced by a politically savvy superintendent as he or she persuades members of the community to support higher tax rates. Thus, it would be inappropriate to control for these other measures of financial resources because a superintendent acting as a trustee would use taxing policies in a redistributive manner by encouraging all citizens in the district to support higher tax rates, knowing that minority students would benefit disproportionately from increased educational expenditures

(Burtless 1996).

Another important constraint under which superintendents function is the quality of the students in the district. For a number of reasons beyond a superintendent's control, some students come to school better prepared to learn than others. One of the most consistent findings in educational research is that the socioeconomic background of students has a very powerful effect on student academic achievement (see, for example, Coleman et al. 1966; Jencks and Phillips 1998). Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are able to increase their children's academic achievement through a variety of known ways, such as by having more educational toys and resources like computers and books in the home. They are also able to increase their children's academic achievement through unknown ways that researchers are still struggling to identify and understand fully (Jencks and Phillips 1998). Although researchers may never be able to explain fully all of the ways that a parent's socioeconomic level affects their child's academic achievement, one finding remains clear: as parent socioeconomic status increases, student academic achievement increases. In order to control for the effect that student socioeconomic background has on academic achievement, we have included the percentage of

students who are economically disadvantaged in the district in our model. The TEA classifies as economically disadvantaged all students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

The second measure in our model which controls for student quality is the percentage of students in special education. Some districts have more students qualifying for special education than others because they have high lead poisoning rates in the area, they are downwind or downstream from chemical plants and consequently have high neurological disorder rates in the area, etc. (Kozol 1991). The third measure which controls for student quality is the percentage of bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Districts with high percentages of students with limited English proficiency face additional challenges as they strive to help students succeed on college entrance and AP tests designed for students whose native tongue is English.

We have chosen not to control for the quality of the teachers in the district because the first portion of our study suggests that increasing the quality of the teachers in the district is one of the most powerful tools available to a superintendent to increase the level of academic achievement among minority students. A number of administrators from the

highest-achieving schools in the first part of our study commented on the talent and commitment of the teachers in the district, and identified these talented teachers as one of the main causes of the district's success in preparing minority students for college. Although hiring competent teachers is surely a concern of all superintendents, a superintendent who is committed to increasing minority academic achievement may make a special effort to do whatever is in his or her power to attract and retain quality teachers.

To summarize, our first model is specified according to the proposition that superintendents exercise considerable discretion and influence when managing their districts; it contains the following control variables: 1) taxable property value per pupil, 2) percentage of economically disadvantaged students, 3) percentage of students in special education, and 4) percentage of bilingual or ESL students. Throughout the remainder of this paper, we will refer to this model as the "minimally specified model."

Findings from Minimally Specified Model

No consistent pattern emerges for our trustee measure. The

trustee measure is positively signed in some models, negatively signed in others, and fails to achieve statistical significance at the .01 level in any of the models. The following output (Table 1), which contains the Hispanic average on the SAT in the year 2001 as the dependent variable, is typical of the results described above.

Table 1 Determinants of Minority College Preparation Levels: Minimally Specified Model

Dependent Variable = 2001 Hispanic SAT Average

Independent Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	Sig.
Trustee	.972	3.38	.29	.77
Taxable Prop. Value Per Pupil	-.0000137	.0000261	-.53	.599
%Economically Disadvantaged	-.244	.29	-8.41	.000
% Spec. Ed.	-1.37	2.02	-.68	.495
% Bilingual or ESL	.91	.678	1.47	.143
(Constant)	1040.533	39.67	26.23	.000

N = 162
R-square = .41
Significance levels reported are for a two-tailed test

As we can see, the trustee measure has a very low t-score which fails to achieve statistical significance. The initial results from these minimally specified models suggest that superintendents who view themselves as trustees do not do a better job of preparing minority students for college than do superintendents who view themselves as delegates.

Before dismissing our main hypothesis so readily, we decided to explore more fully possible reasons why we were unable to find a relationship between our performance indicators and our trustee measure. Perhaps the problem is that we have not limited our data to districts with more than 1,000 students. Smaller districts may not have the staff or resources necessary to record and report their district information accurately, thus making it more difficult for us to find any consistent relationship between our variables of interest. Studies using data similar to ours have often followed the practice of limiting their observations to districts with over 1,000 pupils in recognition of this fact (see, e.g., Meier, Eller, Wrinkle, and Polinard 2001; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard 1999; Meier and Bohte 2003; Meier, McClain, Wrinkle, and Polinard (forthcoming)), and we feel that it is worthwhile to see whether limiting our observations in this manner will affect our results. We

therefore ran the models again, limiting our observations to districts with more than 1,000 pupils. This had little effect on our results, and our trustee measure still fails to achieve statistical significance in any of the models. We then ran all the models again with robust standard errors to account for the heteroskedasticity which tends to plague cross-sectional data such as ours. Once again, this had little effect on our results, and we are left with the sad conclusion that our trustee measure is insignificant.

At this point we felt that it was worthwhile to explore whether the individual questions designed to measure superintendent representational style contained in the superintendent survey had a statistically significant relationship to our measures of college preparation among minority students. To test this possibility we removed our trustee measure and ran the models again, one at a time, using the individual questions, one at a time, as our measures of superintendent representational style. Again, the results changed little.

Returning to the theoretical drawing board, we realized that we were perhaps overlooking the very important possibility that a superintendent's ability to influence district policy should increase with the amount of time that

the superintendent has been employed by the district. If superintendents are committed to their roles as trustees, they should be able to influence some district policies in a very short period of time that will help minority students prepare well for college, such as having the district pay for all students to take the SAT or the ACT at least once and encouraging more minority students to take AP classes. It will take much longer, however, for superintendents to generate support for other policies and then implement them effectively. For example, it could take a number of years for a superintendent to generate the support necessary to realign the district's curriculum with the expectation that all students will eventually take AP courses. Schools in low-performing districts may have already invested heavily in curricula designed to prepare students to enter the workplace, not universities; teachers may have already been hired who are better prepared to teach wood shop than AP physics. It takes time to replace curricula and teachers. It is therefore realistic to propose that the longer superintendents have been employed by a district, the more opportunity they have to implement policies and hire personnel that will improve college preparation among minority students.

In harmony with this view, we decided to respecify our model by including a new variable. The new variable is an interaction between the trustee measure and the amount of time that a superintendent has been employed by the district as superintendent. Our new model contains the original control variables, the trustee variable, and the interaction variable. The new model is now specified according to the proposition that superintendents who view themselves as trustees can improve college preparation levels among minority students to a certain degree regardless of how long they have been employed by the district, but they should be able to increase minority college preparation more the longer they have been employed by the district.

After running all of the respecified models again, the trustee measure and the interaction measure failed to achieve statistical significance in any of the models. The possibility still exists that the two variables could be explaining a lot of the variation in college preparation levels among minority students, but they may not be achieving statistical significance because of the high degree of multicollinearity between our trustee measure and our interaction measure. To account for this possibility, we ran joint F-tests. The results from these tests suggested that

the two variables when taken together do not have a significant effect on college preparation levels among minority students.

In our next attempt at saving the minimally specified model, we decided to use an additional dependent variable as a measure of the level of college preparation among minority students. This variable is the percentage of black and Hispanic students testing above the criterion level (1,100) on the SAT or its equivalent on the ACT. This variable is designed to measure high-end academic achievement, and would have been theoretically appropriate to include in our analysis originally, but we did not feel that it was imperative given the large number of dependent variables already being explored. However, given that our trustee measure and interaction measure failed to achieve statistical significance in any of the models with the original dependent variables, we decided to include this additional dependent variable to make sure that we were not overlooking anything important. Apparently, we were not--our trustee measure and our interaction measure once again failed to achieve statistical significance.

In our last effort to save the minimally specified model, we used 2002 data for all of our performance

indicators. It takes time to generate support for policies and then implement them effectively. It then takes time before a change will be seen in performance indicators. Our original decision to use 2001 data rests on the argument that a newly hired superintendent has the capability during the first year of employment to propose and implement at least some policies that could have an impact on minority student performance. Of course, the possibility also exists that a newly hired superintendent will be so occupied with learning district administrative procedures, meeting other administrative personnel, establishing a good rapport with the school board, etc., that the superintendent will have very little time to make any substantive policy changes soon after his hiring. If this second scenario is more accurate than the first scenario, then perhaps we will begin to see stronger results when using 2002 performance indicators. After running the models again using the 2002 performance indicators, we found very little difference in the results, and our trustee measure and our interaction measure once again failed to achieve statistical significance.

Respecifying the Model: Including Additional Control Variables

As noted earlier, the model described above is specified according to the view that superintendents exercise considerable power and discretion. According to this argument, superintendents can use their influence to make major changes in a district, changes such as persuading the citizens of the district to support higher tax rates, hiring talented personnel who are committed to raising academic performance, and reducing teacher turnover rates. Although superintendents should be able to support and influence changes such as these to some degree, perhaps our model as currently specified overestimates considerably the power of superintendents to alter many of the external and internal constraints under which the district is operating. If this is the case, then our model is under-specified, and we must remedy this by including more control variables.

The first three control variables in our new model (hereafter referred to as the "fully specified model") that control for student characteristics are the same three variables which we used in our minimally specified model to control for student characteristics: 1) the percentage of

economically disadvantaged students, 2) the percentage of students in special education classes, and 3) the percentage of students in bilingual/ESL classes. The coefficient estimates for all three of these variable is expected to be negative.

The fourth control variable is the percentage of teachers with 1 or more emergency permits. Emergency permits allow teachers to teach courses in subject areas that they are not certified to teach. When a district has to rely upon uncertified teachers, academic performance is expected to suffer, especially the high-end academic performance in which we are interested. There are a number of reasons why the percentage of uncertified teachers may be beyond a superintendent's control. For example, a district might have a difficult time retaining quality math and science teachers if local industries aggressively recruit math and science teachers away from the public schools. Other districts may have a surplus of certified math and science teachers because they are located next to large universities. The coefficient estimate for the percentage of teachers with 1 or more emergency permits variable is expected to be negative.

The fifth control variable is the average years of teacher experience. New teachers face a variety of

challenges, including becoming familiar with administrative routines, improving their classroom discipline techniques, mastering the information in their content area, and honing their pedagogical skills. As teachers gain experience, they should improve in all of these areas; this improvement should lead to higher academic performance among minority students. The coefficient estimate for the average years of teacher experience variable is expected to be positive.

The sixth control variable is the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees. The first portion of our study emphasized the importance of having quality teachers in a district who had mastered their content areas. Teachers who have mastered their content areas should be more likely than teachers without solid academic preparation to help students master the subject as well. Some districts may have an advantage in recruiting teachers with advanced degrees because they are close to universities or colleges that offer advanced degrees. These same districts will also have an advantage helping current teachers develop professionally as they take advantage of the closely situated institutions of higher learning. The coefficient estimate for the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees variable is expected to be positive.

The seventh control variable is the teacher turnover rate. High employee turnover rates may contribute to organizational instability and hinder an organization's ability to accomplish its mission. Schools are no different from many other organizations in this regard, and lower teacher turnover rates should help districts perform better across a variety of dimensions. Reducing teacher turnover rates takes on added importance for a district when trying to increase minority academic achievement in particular for a number of reasons. For example, students who are lacking role models and mentors in their personal lives should be more likely to seek these role models and mentors among the teachers at their schools. Several of the administrators we interviewed in the first portion of the study commented on how much the students admired and appreciated the teachers for their commitment to helping the students succeed, and this admiration resulted in the students' efforts to try to please the teacher through high academic performance. The coefficient estimate for the teacher turnover rate variable is expected to be negative.

The eighth control variable is total budgeted revenue per pupil. In general, districts with greater financial resources should have an advantage over districts with fewer

financial resources in raising minority academic achievement. Total budgeted revenue per pupil in a district will largely be the function of the taxable property value per pupil in the district and tax rates. Our earlier model, the minimally specified model, included taxable property value per pupil only as a control for the amount of financial resources available to a district under the assumption that a politically savvy superintendent could generate public support for higher tax rates if the current tax rates were not high enough to generate sufficient revenue. Our current model, by including total budgeted revenue per pupil rather than taxable property value per pupil, is specified according to the argument that superintendents have a negligible influence over tax rates compared to other factors in a district. The coefficient estimate for the total budgeted revenue per pupil variable is expected to be positive.

Our ninth and final control variable is the total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil. In general, districts with higher instructional expenditures per pupil should be more successful than other districts at increasing minority academic achievement. We have an important reason for including instructional expenditures per pupil in addition to total budgeted revenue per pupil. By including

total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil, our model recognizes that while some superintendents may have large amounts of financial resources available to them, they may be constrained in their ability to use these resources for purposes directly related to improving academic instruction. For example, superintendents may face intense local pressure to use financial resources for the construction of athletic facilities and football stadiums (Bissinger 1990). This intense local pressure is likely to be rooted in local mores that may be very difficult for superintendents to influence. The coefficient estimate for the total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil variable is expected to be positive.

To summarize, our fully specified model contains the following control variables: 1) percentage of economically disadvantaged students, 2) percentage of students in special education classes, 3) percentage of students in bilingual/ESL classes, 4) percentage of teachers with one or more emergency permits, 5) average years of teacher experience, 6) percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, 7) teacher turnover rate, 8) total budgeted revenue per pupil, and 9) total budgeted instructional expenditures per pupil. Our fully specified model differs from our minimally specified

model in important conceptual ways. The minimally specified model was specified according to the view that one of the essential ways superintendents could improve college preparation levels among minority students was by altering critical constraints under which the district was operating, such as teacher turnover rates and the amount of financial resources available. The statistical results from our minimally specified model suggest that this is not the case. By controlling for the teacher characteristic variables and financial resources variables described above, the fully specified model acknowledges that superintendents may be limited in their ability to affect important constraints under which the district is operating.

Despite their limited ability to influence important constraints such as total instructional expenditures per pupil, superintendents who are committed to increasing college preparation levels among minority students still have a wide range of policies they could implement and generate support for, such as having parent information nights on the advantages of the AP program or adopting the block scheduling format. Adopting the block scheduling format is a particularly appropriate example for illustrating how superintendents may be increasing college preparation levels

among minority students while operating for the most part within existing personnel and financial constraints. A number of administrators interviewed in the first portion of our study from the highest-performing districts in the state identified the block scheduling format as being very useful in helping prepare minority students for college. Administrators at some of the lowest-performing districts in the state also mentioned that they had adopted the block scheduling format, but their teachers were still using the same lesson plans and pedagogical techniques that they had used when teaching standard fifty-minute periods. The administrators at these low-performing districts suggested that the main reason why teachers did not alter their lesson plans and pedagogical techniques to better suit the block scheduling format was that the teachers were lazy or indifferent. A superintendent who is committed to increasing minority academic preparation would motivate these teachers to revise their lesson plans and pedagogical techniques so that they could take full advantage of the block scheduling format. While student academic achievement will still be affected by teacher academic preparation in such a scenario, thus making it appropriate to control for such factors as the percentage of teachers with an advanced degree in our

statistical models, the superintendent can still increase a teacher's effectiveness regardless of the initial quality or effectiveness of the teacher. Now that we have provided the conceptual justification for our model, we will now explore our statistical results.

Findings from Fully Specified Model

After running the fully specified model ten times with the different dependent variables outlined earlier, no consistent pattern emerges for our trustee measure. As with the minimally specified model, the trustee measure is positively signed in some models, negatively signed in others, generally has a low t-score, and fails to achieve statistical significance at the .01 level in any of the models. The following output (Table 2), which contains the black student average on the SAT in the year 2001 as the dependent variable, is typical of the results described above.

Table 2 Determinants of Minority College Preparation Levels: Fully Specified Model

Dependent Variable = 2001 Black SAT Average

Independent Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	Sig.
Trustee	-2.42	4.46	-.53	.6
% Economically Disadvantaged	-1.8	.47	-3.82	.000
% Spec. Ed.	-3.99	2.77	-1.44	.154
% Bilingual or ESL	1.28	1.16	1.1	.275
% Teacher Permits	-2.59	1.77	-1.47	.146
Avg. Years Teacher Experience	-12.12	4.49	-2.7	.008
% Teachers with Advanced Degree	1.99	.93	2.15	.035
Teacher Turn Rate	-.54	1.31	-.41	.682
Total Budgeted Rev. Per Pupil	.0021	.0159	.13	.894
Total Budgeted Inst. Expends. Per Pupil	.00144	.0237	.06	.952
(Constant)	1083.282	98.31	11.02	.000

N = 94
R-square = .43
Significance Levels reported are for a two-tailed test

Once again, the trustee measure has a very low t-score that fails to achieve statistical significance. The initial results from these fully specified models suggest that superintendents who view themselves as trustees do not do a

better job of preparing minority students for college than do superintendents who view themselves as delegates.

Not to be deterred, we once again explored the same possible reasons why we were unable to find a relationship between our performance indicators and our trustee measure that we explored earlier with the minimally specified model. We limited our data to districts with more than 1,000 students. Our results changed little. We ran the models using robust standard errors to account for heteroskedasticity. Little difference. We removed the trustee measure and ran the models again with the individual questions designed to measure superintendent representational style contained in the superintendent survey. Our findings remained relatively constant. We removed the individual questions and included the trustee measure and the interaction measure which takes into account the amount of time the superintendent has been employed by the district. There was little difference in our results. We ran joint F-tests to see if the trustee measure and the interaction measure when taken together have a statistically significant effect on college preparation levels among minority students. The results suggest that they do not. We used the percentage of black and then Hispanic students testing above the

criterion level on the SAT as two additional dependent variables designed to measure college preparation levels among minority students. Our trustee measure and our interaction measure failed to achieve statistical significance once again. We ran all of the models again using 2002 data for all of our performance indicators. The results are similar to the results obtained when using 2001 data for all of our performance indicators. Our conclusion remains unchanged: According to our statistical analysis, superintendents who view themselves as trustees do not do a better job of increasing college preparation levels among minority students than do superintendents who view themselves as delegates.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the first three chapters of our study, we identified the numerous policies, procedures, programs, and pedagogical practices that administrators in the highest-performing school districts in the state felt contributed to increasing levels of college preparation among minority students. The first portion of our study made important contributions to our understanding of what educators are doing to increase college preparation levels among minority students. It also provided us with additional insights into the minority student college preparation process that led us to consider high minority college preparation levels as a positive externality. Once high minority college preparation levels are viewed as a positive externality, attention must be shifted from *what* a district is doing to increase college preparation levels among minority students to *why* a district has chosen to increase college preparation levels among minority students more than other school districts do. This is a critical question that has largely been ignored by educational researchers trained in schools of education.

In the second portion of our study we hypothesized that

the reason why some districts do an excellent job of preparing minority students for college is that they are led by superintendents who view themselves as trustees capable of acting in the long-term interests of society. This hypothesis was driven by the findings of many researchers that "Power has been centralized in the superintendent's hands at the behest of the school board because the superintendent is a full-time, professional expert who has a staff and is able to speak for the entire administration" (Hess 13, 1999). Consequently, in theory the superintendent has the power and knowledge required in order to act in the long-term interests of society should he choose to do so. While this appears to be a defensible proposition, according to our analysis superintendents who view themselves as trustees do not do a better job of increasing college preparation levels among minority students than do superintendents who view themselves as delegates. This final chapter will now address possible reasons why we were unable to find a statistical relationship between superintendent representational style and minority college preparation levels. We will also make suggestions for further research in this area.

The first possible reason why we may have been unable to find statistical support for our hypothesis is that we use

attitudinal measures of superintendent representational style. Our main hypothesis was that the more a school superintendent views his role as a trustee, the higher the college preparation level among minority students in his district will be. This hypothesis is framed according to the nature of the data we used; in particular, we hypothesized that how a superintendent views his representational role has an impact on college preparation levels among minority students. While this is a realistic scenario, how a superintendent views his representational role may not be nearly as important when explaining minority college preparation levels as what representational role he adopts when he interacts with the school board and manages the district. In other words, whether a superintendent views himself as a trustee may not be as important as whether he acts like a trustee.

We chose to use survey data for a variety of defensible reasons, the most important of which was that the superintendent survey contained questions that were specifically designed to measure superintendent representational style. Although we felt that using the survey data was therefore appropriate for our purposes, future studies that look at the effect of superintendent

representational style on student achievement might benefit from using behavioral measures of representational style rather than attitudinal measures. For example, perhaps later studies could use the percentage of items on the school board meeting agenda that have been placed there by the superintendent as a measure of superintendent "trusteeness": the higher the percentage of items placed on the agenda by the superintendent, the more he is behaving like a trustee. These data are not yet available for a sizeable percentage of the school districts in Texas (otherwise we certainly would have used them in our study); however, such data might become available in the future, and if researchers are actively looking for behavioral measures of superintendent trusteeness, they might find an excellent way to minimize the gap between theoretical concepts surrounding representation and how those concepts are operationalized using behavioral indicators.

While future studies might want to consider using behavioral measures of superintendent trusteeness, they might also want to consider using data from a state that was not a member of the Old Confederacy. The average year of birth for superintendents who responded to our survey was 1948. This means that a large percentage of the superintendents in our

study started attending school themselves before *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954. It also means that a large percentage of the superintendents in our study might have made it all the way through their elementary and secondary education years attending effectually segregated schools since many of the states in the Old Confederacy did not begin integrating their schools until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Let us be clear on what we are saying, and what we are not saying. We are not saying that the typical superintendent in Texas is an old white male who attended elementary and secondary school in one of the most racist states in the Union during a time of tremendous racial conflict and that this early childhood experience might have been critical in the formation of racial attitudes that are largely resistant to change despite having received advanced degrees and much professional training. We are simply saying that future studies might want to use data from another state. California might be nice.

Using data from a state that was not a member of the Old Confederacy seems increasingly interesting when we acknowledge that college preparation among minority students is just one of many worthwhile issues competing for a superintendent's attention. One superintendent who views

himself as a trustee may be focusing his time and attention on increasing college preparation levels among minority students, while another superintendent who views himself as a trustee may be focusing his time and attention on another policy area that could also produce positive externalities in our society. This means that the relationship between superintendent trusteeness and college preparation levels will be attenuated because superintendents are responsible for determining and implementing policies in a number of policy areas, and this relationship may be more attenuated in the south than in other regions of the country.

We do not want to beat the issue of using data from another state into the ground here, but it is also interesting to note that, in our survey, 1982 was the average for the year when superintendents finished their highest degree received. One of the assumptions upon which our main hypothesis was based is that superintendents possess the knowledge and skill required in order to act in the long-term interests of society. Much of this knowledge and skill will be gained on the job and through professional associations, of course, but it is reasonable to assume that a fair amount should also be gained through a superintendent's formal education. Since many of the respondents to our survey

finished their highest degree before much of the research on the long-term benefits to society of college attendance by minority students had been completed, their formal education may not have prepared them very well to act as a trustee in this area. Of course it is possible that even after their formal education has been completed superintendents could still gain the knowledge and expertise needed to act as a trustees in this area through other means, such as their membership in professional associations. But when our survey respondents were asked to list what professional associations they belonged to, the most frequent response was the Texas Association of School Administrators, not a national association. This means that if educational professionals rely upon their membership in professional organizations to keep them abreast of educational trends and developments once their formal education is completed, and if increasing college preparation levels among minority students has not received as much attention among educational professionals in Texas as it has among educational professionals in other states, a superintendent in Texas who views himself as a trustee may be less likely to increase college preparation levels among minority students than a superintendent in another state who views himself as a trustee.

Another possible reason why we did not find statistical support for our hypothesis is related to what it means to be acting as a trustee. One of the things that our trustee variable was designed to measure was whether superintendents deferred to the judgment of the school board or relied upon their professional training and expertise when making policy decisions for their districts. This could be viewed as the "*professional* training" element in our measure. Our trustee variable was also designed to measure whether superintendents were willing to defend and advocate policies that their professional training had taught them were in the best long-term interests of their students and society at large, despite opposition from important parts of the community. This could be viewed as the "civic-mindedness" element of our measure. To put this into one sentence, we had hoped that our trustee measure would capture 1) the degree to which a superintendent relies upon his own *professional* judgment in order to 2) advocate policies *in the long-term interests of society.* Because we had to remove references to "relying upon your *professional* judgment" and "acting in the long-term interests of society" to avoid using loaded questions, our trustee measure may not be capturing as much of the "*professional* judgment" and "civic-mindedness" elements as we

had hoped. What we are left with might be largely a superintendent's tendency to do his own thing, whether his decisions are informed by his professional training or not, and whether they are in the long-term interests of society or not.

This weakness in our measure becomes more interesting after considering the implications of research by Mann (1976). He suggests that older school administrators are more likely to rely upon their own judgment than are younger school administrators: "Increased experience on the job was not associated with increased trusteeness, nor was increased duration in a location. Age alone [among experience on the job, increased duration in a location, and age] remained associated with the propensity to be a trustee" (39). Mann's measure of trusteeness differs from ours in important respects, but there are enough similarities that his suggestion forces us to ask an unsettling question: Is it possible that a superintendent relies upon his own judgment more as he ages? If it is possible, is it likely that his civic-mindedness increases as he ages, or is it more likely that another factor is driving superintendents to rely more upon their own judgment as they age? Since our data is not longitudinal (and neither is Mann's), they will not permit us

to say whether superintendents increasingly act as trustees as they age. Answering this specific question, however, is not our main concern. Our main concern is whether improvements in our trustee measure could be made. Could improvements in our measure be made so that when a superintendent relies upon his own decision-making when running his district, we are capturing the degree to which a superintendent's professional training and knowledge (and not some other criteria) inform his decision-making? Could improvements in our measure be made so that when a superintendent says he is willing to advocate policies to which important parts of the community may be hostile, we know that he is doing it out of concern for the long-term interests of society and not some other motivation? We think that the answer to these questions is yes, and we encourage future researchers to get on the ball and start working on this.

Of course the most obvious possible reason why we were unable to find a relationship between superintendent representational style and minority college preparation levels is that such a relationship might not exist. We feel that we provided justifiable arguments earlier for why, given the nature of positive externalities, superintendents must

act as trustees in order to increase minority student college preparation levels, so we will not repeat the arguments here. What we will do, however, is note that other researchers have argued that academic performance in a district might increase as the community becomes more involved in a school district's decision-making, thus making it necessary for superintendents to adopt the delegate orientation in order to improve minority academic performance.

For example, in a seminal work on the importance of community involvement in school decision-making, Mann (1976) identifies four possible paths by which community involvement might increase student educational achievement. Characteristic of his arguments is his assertion that increases in parent self-efficacy may result as "parents, as citizens, participate in educational decisions, become more knowledgeable and confident, and then encourage their children to higher levels of achievement" (80). Mann also suggests that as parents become more involved in the school's decision-making processes, they will be more likely to financially support the schools (75). These sensible arguments, and others from the community involvement literature, force us to consider the possibility that superintendents who act as trustees may be limited in their

ability to increase the production of positive externalities because community involvement is necessary in order for students to succeed well academically. We must point out, however, that although our statistical analysis suggests that minority college preparation levels do not increase as superintendents increasingly view themselves as trustees, our analysis also suggests that minority college preparation levels do not increase as superintendents increasingly view themselves as delegates either.

Implications for Further Research

As far as we know, we are the first scholars to view college preparation levels among minority students as a positive externality in our research. By viewing college preparation levels among minority students as a positive externality, our focus shifted from what a district is doing to increase college preparation levels among minority students to why a district has chosen to increase college preparation levels among minority students more than other school districts do. We hypothesized that the reason why is that they are led by superintendents who use their professional training to act in the long-term interests of

society. We provided theoretical and empirical justifications for why the superintendent should be the first suspect in our investigation, but, alas, we found no support for our hypothesis.

This does not mean that there are not other suspects. Local school boards also exert influence over district-wide policymaking, and hopefully future research will examine their impact on college preparation levels among minority students. Future research could also consider the impact of state boards of education, principals, teachers, etc.

It also does not mean that superintendent representational style is of no importance in every situation. For example, perhaps having a superintendent who acts as a delegate is beneficial in a district with a highly competent school board. If the school board is full of incompetent boobs, it might be a good thing to have a superintendent who acts as a trustee. Hopefully future studies that address the effect of superintendent representational style on academic performance will also consider the quality of the school board.

In addition to considering the quality of the school board, future studies may also benefit from exploring how minority representation on the school board interacts with

superintendent representational style, especially if the studies address issues of academic performance among minority students. Addressing issues of minority representation on school boards was beyond the scope of our current project, but one can easily see how a talented researcher with a large data set, a sound understanding of statistics, and a gift for operationalizing representational concepts could make a living out of this sort of thing.

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